HISTORY of WAR

THE STORIES, STRA HINES

THE FIGHT FOR VIMY RIDGE
THE WWI CAMPAIGN THAT UNITED CANADA

CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST
THE START OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

***Great Battles* SARMADA**
The Crusades take to the Field of Blood

WAR IN THE CONGO
20 YEARS OF AFRICAN HORROR

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The fight for

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HISTORY of WAR

Welcome

It's known as one of the bloodiest battles in the history of warfare. Although the Soviet Union was victorious in the Battle of Stalingrad, you couldn't really describe the Russians as "winners", such was the human cost of a conflict that lasted more than five months. In this issue of *History of War*, we explore how the battle for the city played out; a tale of bitter hand-to-hand fighting, and of attrition. Find our feature on page 20.

The rest of the issue is, as ever, absolutely packed. We examine the wars in the Congo, where nine African nations ended up fighting for control of what is now one of the poorest countries on the planet (page 58); there's an analysis of the role of the Post Office workers who took up arms in the First World War (page 52); we visit the Battle of Sarmada (page 38); and, well, turn the page for a full contents list! Do enjoy the issue.

Paul Pettengale *Editorial Director*
paul.pettengale@anthem-publishing.com

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Contributors

MARTIN J DOUGHERTY is a writer specialising in history, defence and martial arts. He is the author of *The Medieval Warrior: Weapons, Technology And Fighting Techniques AD1000-1500*, and this month analyses the Battle of Sarmada (page 38).

NICK SOLDINGER is a renowned writer and journalist specialising in military history. In this issue of *History of War*, he examines the African conflicts in the Congo, where millions died during decades of torment and attrition. Turn to page 58 for the full story.

DUNCAN BARRETT is an author and historian who has, most recently, written *Men Of Letters*, a book about the Post Office Rifles and their role in WWI. In this issue, he describes how those valiant men fought in the harshest of conditions in Belgium and France (page 52).

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SAVE MONEY! GET THREE ISSUES OF *HISTORY OF WAR* FOR £3 (PAGE 46).

A Soviet crew fires on German positions in Stalingrad, November 1942

Getty

ON THE COVER

The Battle of Stalingrad p20

REGULARS

War In Focus Conflict through a camera lens 6

Dispatches The latest news from around the globe 12

Letters Your views and opinions .19

Military Milestones A history of body armour, from the Assyrians to the 21st Century 80

Reviews The latest book, DVD and game releases rated by our expert team of writers 89

War in Numbers Summing up the French Revolution, from the length of Napoleon's reign to the number killed 98

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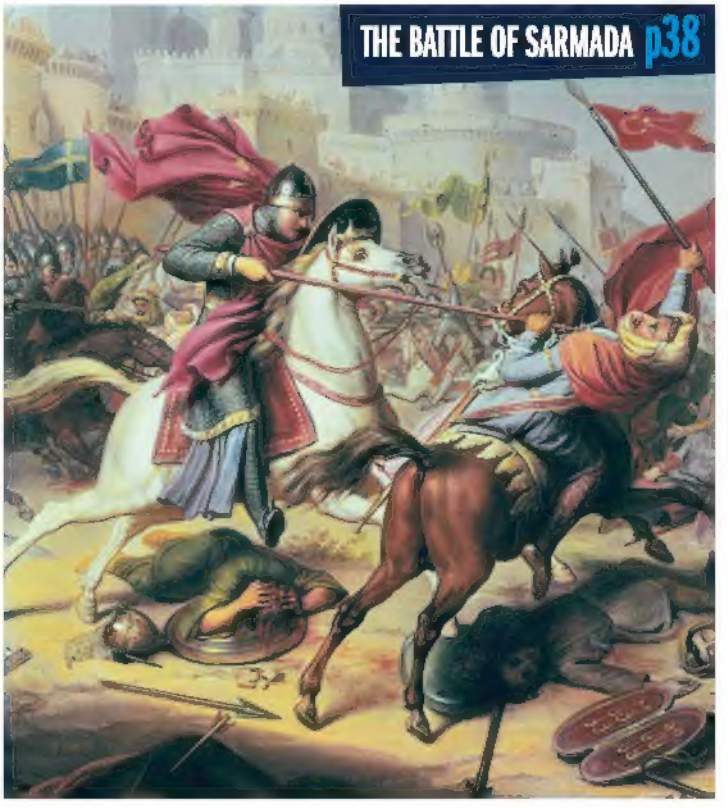
GET THREE ISSUES OF *HISTORY OF WAR* FOR JUST £3!

p46

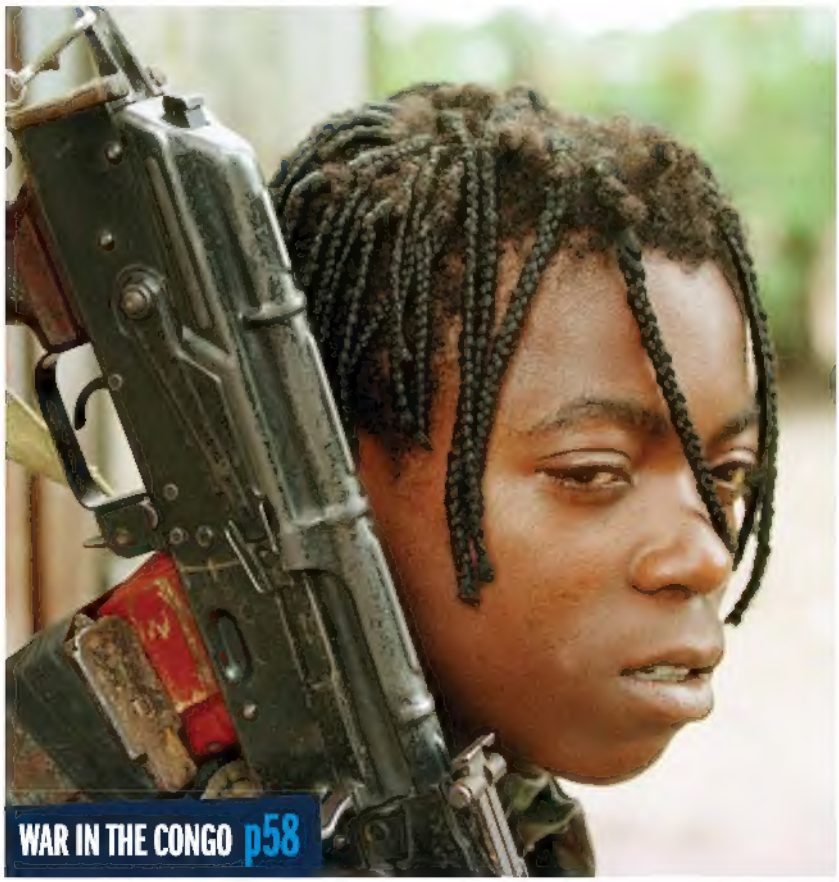


THE BATTLE OF SARMADA p38

p82

p52

REMEMBERING VIMY RIDGE p74


WAR IN THE CONGO p58

p48

p80

HISTORY of WAR

Contents

SEPTEMBER 2014 ISSUE 07

Features

▶ **Storm in Stalingrad**
The 1942-43 Battle of Stalingrad was one of the bloodiest engagements in history, as well as being a turning point in the Second World War. *History of War* takes a closer look **20**

▶ **Leaders of Men**
American Generals
We left out Norman Schwarzkopf and Omar Bradley – so who *did* we pick? **34**

▶ **Great Battles *Sarmada***
In 1119AD, in what we now know as Syria, an almighty clash erupted between the Crusaders and the Turks **38**

▶ **Trigger Point**
The Iran-Iraq War
How Saddam Hussein's attempts to exploit a weakened Iran for Iraq's gain caused a bloody conflict that lasted eight long years **48**

Men Of Letters
From mailmen to military heroes – the Post Office workers who went to fight on the Western Front **52**

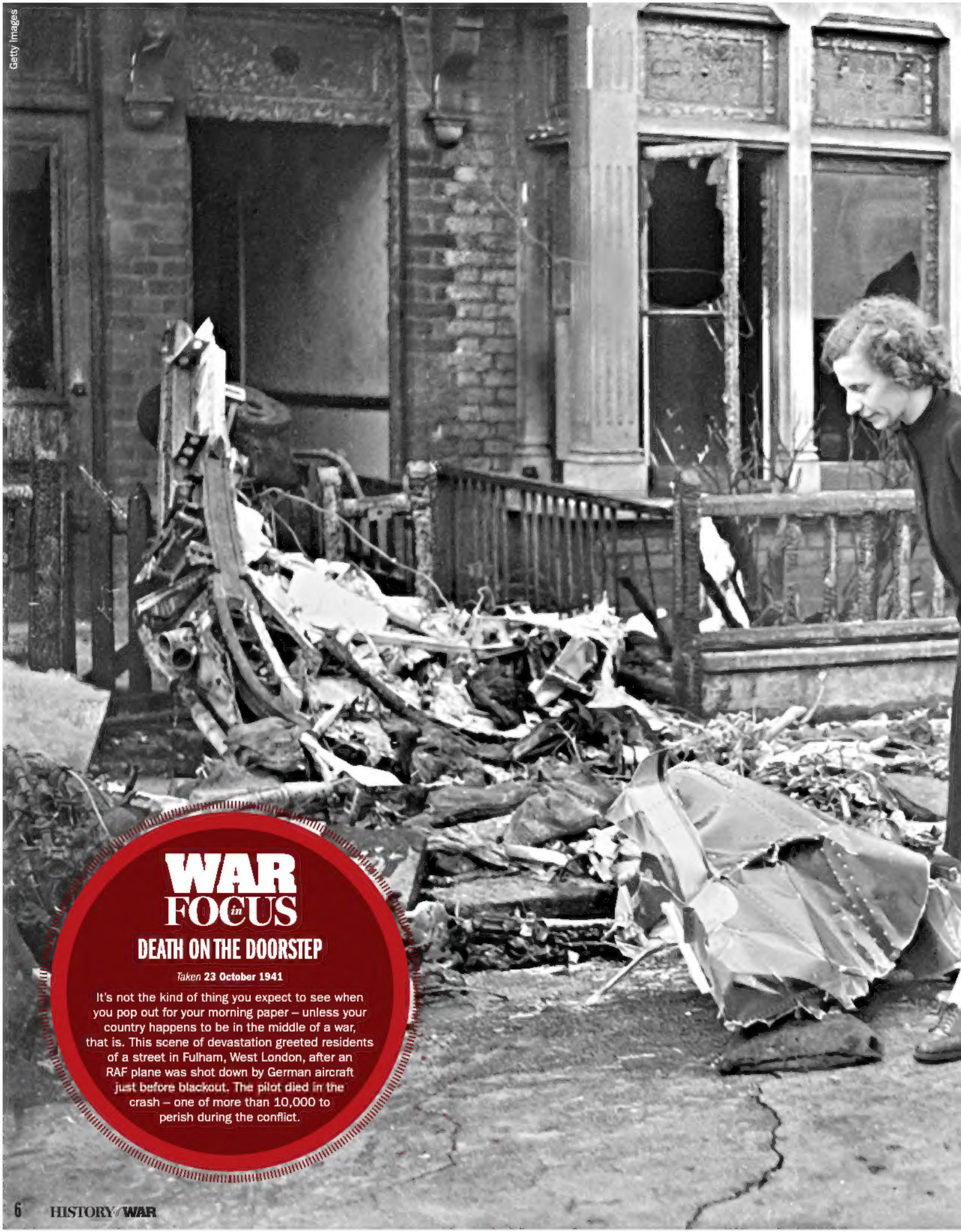
▶ **War In The Congo**
The African country's rich natural resources may seem like a godsend, but they've been nothing but a curse, with greed leading to conflict **58**

▶ **Standing For The Fallen**
History of War visits the Vimy Ridge memorial site in France, to explore the Canadians' role in WWI **74**

▶ **V For Valour *Maurice "Moggy" Mayne***
Read about the British airman who embarked on one of military history's greatest-ever escape missions, and lived to tell the tale **82**

The Ten Greatest *War Drama Box Sets*
From *Band Of Brothers* to *Napoleon*, we give our rundown of the best military-based TV series **96**

▶ Denotes on the cover



Getty Images

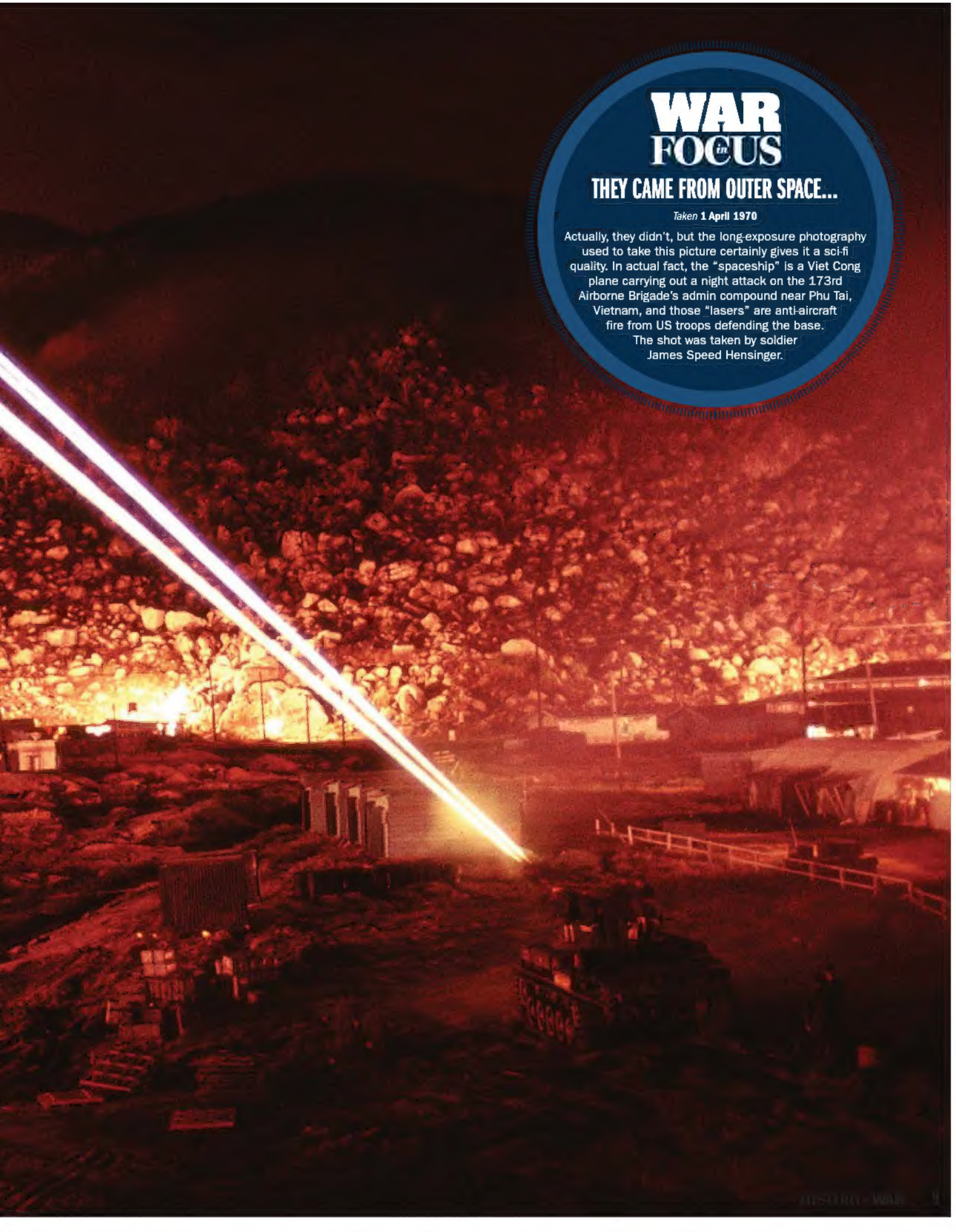
WAR in FOCUS

DEATH ON THE DOORSTEP

Taken **23 October 1941**

It's not the kind of thing you expect to see when you pop out for your morning paper – unless your country happens to be in the middle of a war, that is. This scene of devastation greeted residents of a street in Fulham, West London, after an RAF plane was shot down by German aircraft just before blackout. The pilot died in the crash – one of more than 10,000 to perish during the conflict.

Rex Features



WAR in FOCUS

THEY CAME FROM OUTER SPACE...

Taken **1 April 1970**

Actually, they didn't, but the long-exposure photography used to take this picture certainly gives it a sci-fi quality. In actual fact, the "spaceship" is a Viet Cong plane carrying out a night attack on the 173rd Airborne Brigade's admin compound near Phu Tai, Vietnam, and those "lasers" are anti-aircraft fire from US troops defending the base. The shot was taken by soldier James Speed Hensinger.

© Clive Limpkin/The Battle of Bogside (Penguin, 1972)

WAR FOCUS

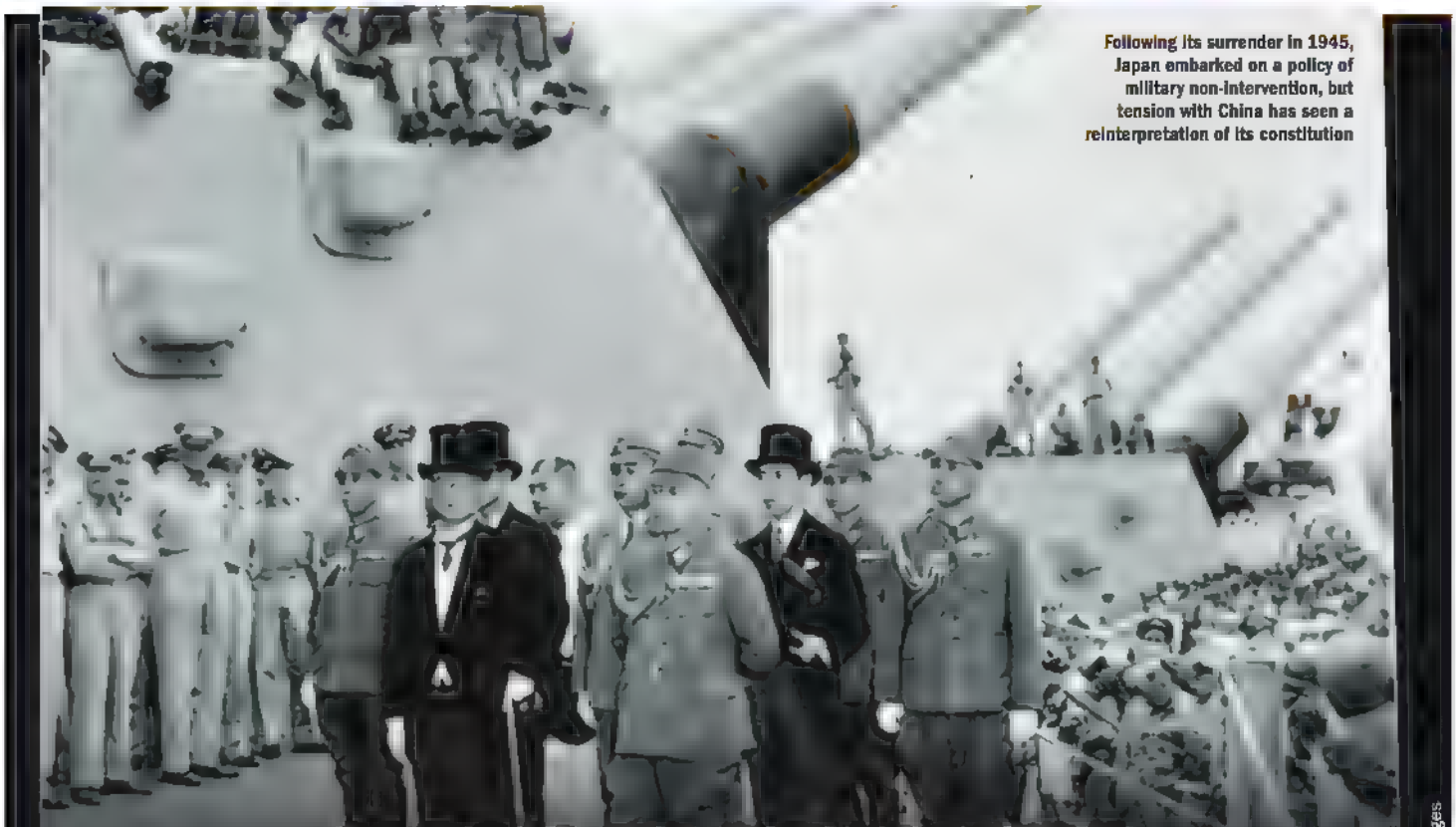
"EXCUSE ME, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

Taken **January 1969**

War and innocence meet head-on in this photograph taken in Belfast during the height of the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland. On one side of the picture, a British soldier on patrol, a look of concentration etched across his face. On the other side, a young girl, scared and bemused at what is happening right outside her home. For so many people around the world, childhood is stolen from them by war.

DISPATCHES

Military news and events from around the globe, including WWI commemorations, record prices for unusual military memorabilia, and the real Captain Blackadder...



Following its surrender in 1945, Japan embarked on a policy of military non-intervention, but tension with China has seen a reinterpretation of its constitution

Getty Images

JAPAN IN DRAMATIC POST-WAR POLICY SHIFT

It's been more than 60 years since Japan placed a pacifist clause in its constitution banning its military from fighting abroad, but now Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet has adopted a controversial resolution to lift the ban.

The move will immediately enhance Japan's military options by ending the ban on exercising "collective self-defence" or helping allies under attack. It will also relax limits on activities in UN-led peace-keeping operations and "grey zone" incidents short of full-scale war, according to a draft cabinet resolution, but Abe stressed that there is no change in the general principle that Japan cannot send troops overseas.

Supporters of the re-interpretation of the clause claim that the ban has historically prevented Japan from being able to adequately defend itself, and represents a step in the right direction to ensure its defence policies are more flexible. It also better aligns the Japanese military with the militaries of other advanced nations. But critics maintain that the Japanese public will not endorse the commitment of its own military to foreign wars, and many want to keep hold of Japan's pacifist stance. Hundreds of protesters have marched against the resolution, and one man has set himself alight to draw attention to the debate.

China, whose relationship with Japan is strained due to an on-going maritime dispute, has also been quick to oppose the move. Hong Lei, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, stated, "We demand that Japan respects the reasonable security concerns of its Asian neighbours, and prudently handles the relevant matter."

However, the US is likely to welcome the news, as the nation has long been keen to forge a stronger alliance with Tokyo.

Article 9 of the Constitution, which was adopted after Japan's 1945 defeat and has never been revised, states (official translation), "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. (2) To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognised."

Legal revisions must still be approved by parliament, and restrictions to amendments could still be imposed.

HATE MAIL SENT TO DAN SNOW AFTER HE CHALLENGES WWI "FACTS"

TV historian's myths list draws the ire of war veterans' families

When television broadcaster Dan Snow produced a list attempting to debunk "myths" surrounding WWI, he was probably expecting some flak, but he's revealed that he's been sent hate mail and abusive messages.

Snow's list, published by the BBC in February, aimed to persuade the public to stop considering the 1914-18 conflict as the biggest British wartime tragedy. "By setting it [WWI] apart as uniquely awful, we are blinding ourselves to the reality of not just WWI but war in general," he said. "We are also in danger of belittling the experience of soldiers and civilians caught up in countless other appalling conflicts throughout history and the present day. It's absolutely vital that these myths are challenged."

The broadcaster claimed that much of the hate mail had been sent by people who have read the experiences of war written by their relatives in diaries,

Snow suggested that for some men, life in the military was far better than at home during peace time

but suggested that these contradict the experiences of the majority.

The ten "myths" on the list are: 1) The Great War was the bloodiest war in history up to that point. 2) Most soldiers died in the conflict. 3) Men lived in trenches for years on end. 4) The upper class got off lightly. 5) British soldiers were "lions led by donkeys". 6) Gallipoli was fought only by Australians and New Zealanders. 7) Tactics on the Western Front remained unchanged despite repeated failure. 8) No one won. 9) The Treaty of Versailles was harsh. 10) Everyone hated the war.

WORLD WAR ONE CENTENARY HERALDS GREATER PROTECTION FOR SUNKEN BATTLESHIPS

REGULATION SHOULD HALT THE PLUNDER OF SUBMERGED MILITARY VESSELS

Large-scale pillaging, looting and the deliberate destruction of ships lost during the First World War may be a thing of the past, thanks to a UNESCO agreement aimed at protecting sunken vessels

The agreement, called the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, was introduced in 2001 but only protects ships sunk at least 100 years ago. So now the centenary of WWI is here, thousands of watery graves of vessels such as warships, submarines and hospital barges will receive the safeguards.

UNESCO has reported that pillaging has been happening on a very large scale, and says that the regulation will prevent commercial exploitation of the sites, including scrap-metal recovery, which has been on the increase as certain metals become more valuable. The agreement also protects sites from damage from other ships, such as trawlers

In 2011, three British cruisers – HMS Aboukir, HMS Hogue and HMS Cressy – were dismantled for copper and bronze by Dutch ships. The Netherlands is yet to sign the agreement, which has so far been adopted by 48 countries.

The days of pillaging sunken WWI warships are hopefully over, thanks to the UNESCO convention

News in Brief

LAOS AUTHORITIES DEFUSE BOMB LEFT OVER FROM THE VIETNAM WAR

A 500lb MK82 bomb with a potential blast area of around 1,500 metres has been defused in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. The ordnance, dropped by the US during the Vietnam War, was found by workers preparing a construction site.

REWARD OFFERED FOR RETURN OF STOLEN WWII JEEP

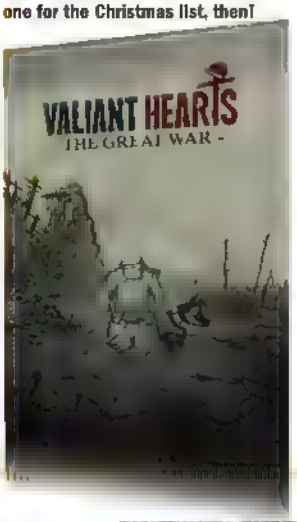
Devastated owners of a Willys MB US Army Jeep have offered a reward of £1,000 for the return of their beloved vehicle after it was stolen from Bobbingworth in Essex. The Jeep has been in the family for almost 70 years and has the number plate FHO 808. If you have any information on its whereabouts, please let Boris know on 07587 099353.

SCHOOLKIDS GIVEN A TASTE OF THE EVACUATION EXPERIENCE

Isle of Wight schoolchildren found out what it was really like to be evacuated when they joined in a local heritage event to recreate the WWII years. Havenstreet Station was transformed into a wartime setting, and children tasted food of the era, experienced air-raid sirens and wore gas masks.

HOW A NEW GAME GETS TO GRIPS WITH THE GREAT WAR

The First World War comes to life in a new PS4 game, *Valiant Hearts*, which takes the form of a puzzle adventure mixed with action sequences and historical information. According to gamers, it's "one of the best games released this year so far". Definitely one for the Christmas list, then!



Events

▶ 23-25 AUGUST
Tanks, Trucks & Firepower Show
This three-day event showcases a huge range of tanks and military vehicles, with battle re-enactments and a must-see display by the Alvis Fighting Vehicle Society.
Dunchurch, nr Rugby, Warwickshire.
www.tankstrucksandfirepower.co.uk

▶ 23-25 AUGUST
Mount Edgcumbe at War
This annual event by the Cornwall MVT has exhibitors and traders along with military vehicles of all eras, wartime displays and re-enactors.
Mount Edgcumbe Park, Cornwall.
www.cornwallmvt.co.uk

▶ 30-31 AUGUST
MK Museum 1940s Weekend
Relive wartime Britain with a vintage tea room and pub, re-enactors, period vehicles, exhibitions, stalls, memorabilia, music and dance.
Milton Keynes Museum, Bucks.
www.mkmuseum.org.uk

▶ 5-7 SEPTEMBER
The Victory Show
This huge tribute to WWII features aircraft (both static and flying), hundreds of re-enactors and military vehicles, tank rides, a steam railway and dealer stalls.
Foxlands Farm, Cosby, Leicestershire.
www.thevictoryshow.co.uk

▶ 5-7 SEPTEMBER
Tanks In Town
Take a trip to Mons in Belgium as it commemorates its liberation with a huge invasion of WWII tanks, APCs, half-tracks, Jeeps and trucks.
Bois Brûle, Ghlin, Belgium.
www.tanksintown.be

▶ 7 SEPTEMBER
Mark Carter Militaria & Medal Fair
Over 100 tables selling medals, badges, military books and more. Free parking in huge car park.
Woking Leisure Centre, Surrey.
01753 534777

▶ 14 SEPTEMBER
GHQ Militaria Fair
This event has been running for over 25 years and is one of the biggest in the South. More than 100 tables sell all manner of uniforms, equipment, medals and more.
The Maltings, Farnham, Surrey.
www.ghq.uk.com **(Cont on p18)**

MEMOIR OF SWANAGE VETERAN TELLS UNUSUAL TALES OF WAR

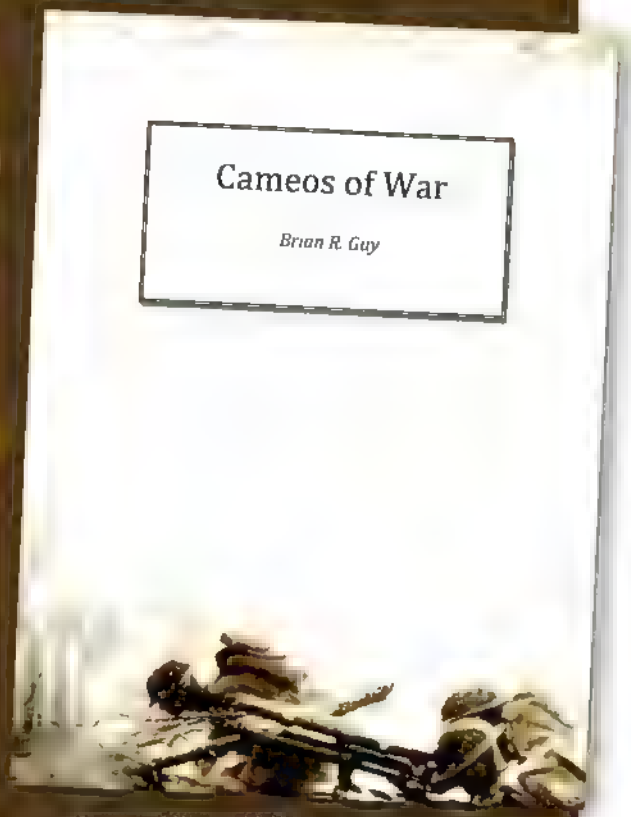
Dorset man's tales of "daft, horrible and downright eccentric" actions

Crawling around in the "stinking wet mud of the river Maas" in Holland, Brian Guy, a sapper serving with the 246 Field Company Royal Engineers, set up a gramophone behind enemy lines and played the sound of men preparing to build a bridge. It was just one of many bizarre personal events in World War Two that motivated Guy to create a book from his memories, entitled *Cameos Of War*.

The gramophone story is one that he didn't dare repeat for many decades, because he thought no one would believe him, but now the story is recorded forever, alongside the tale of how he used a modified garden roller to clear a battlefield of wooden shoe mines, and more.

IT WAS ONE OF MANY BIZARRE … MOTIVATED GUY TO CREATE A …

Now 89, the great-grandfather decided to publish 100 copies of his book to raise money for the charity BLESMA, the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association, an organisation close to Guy's heart after the terrible injuries he received from his years at war. He still has a steel ball in his hand from a mine, and his leg is held together with metal plates stamped with "war office", after it was "broken into so many bits it was almost impossible to put it back together".



Cameos Of War, which describes Brian's journey from Normandy to the German border, and all the actions that took place, is available for £11, with all proceeds going to BLESMA. To get hold of a copy (before they're all gone), email brian@raymondguy55.freeserve.co.uk.

World War Two veteran receives his war medals after 68 years

Lance Corporal William Ferridge was too busy to request his war medals at the end of his military service in 1946 – but, luckily, his friends have stepped in to make sure that the 91-year-old didn't miss out.

Ferridge, from Whitetoothe in Hampshire, earned the Italy Star, the Africa Star, the Defence Medal and the War Medal while serving with the Royal Corps of Signals, but he explained: "I never got around to applying for my medals – life got in the way."

On his behalf, 68 years later, his close friends secretly applied to the Ministry of Defence for the unclaimed medals. When Ferridge attended a flag-raising ceremony to mark Armed Forces Day, it was the perfect opportunity to honour the veteran at last, and he was presented with his long-overdue decorations by Marjorie Smallman, the Mayor of Havant. Ferridge said: "This was a big surprise, but a very nice one!"

William Ferridge receives his medals – just 68 years late!

SERVICE RECORDS REVEAL DIVERSITY OF ROYAL AIR FORCE HEROES

RAF SERVICEMEN DETAILED IN HUGE ONLINE COLLECTION

Never-before-seen WWI records of around 450,000 men of the Royal Air Force and Royal Flying Corps have come to light, thanks to a joint venture between The National Archives and Findmypast.co.uk.

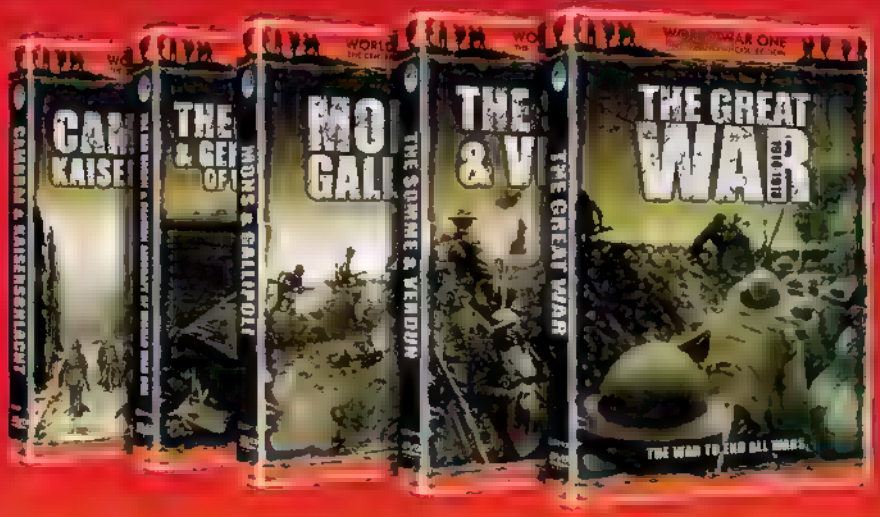
The records reveal that at least 58 nationalities served in the RAF during the war, including Russia, Brazil, Japan and the first Indian to fly in combat, Hardutt Singh Malik. They also suggest that the background of the airmen was unimportant when it came to combat, with the working classes working alongside officers, and their successes equally celebrated with medals. Previous occupations are also listed, and show that comedians and actors helped to swell the ranks.

On top of this, the records, taken from The National Archives and digitised by Findmypast.co.uk, provide details about the airmen's appearance, religious denomination and family status. With relatives able to access the records for the first time, they can now find out what their ancestors looked like, what their participation in the war was, and their next of kin – which is useful for tracing further familial links.

The records mostly date from 1912, when the Royal Flying Corps was formed, but include entries from 1899, when the Royal Engineers Balloon Service participated in the Boer Wars.

AT LEAST 58 DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES SERVED IN THE RAF DURING THE WAR, INCLUDING INDIA, BRAZIL AND JAPAN

WORLD WAR ONE
THE CENTENARY COLLECTION



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BLACKADDER REALLY DID GO FORTH IN WWI

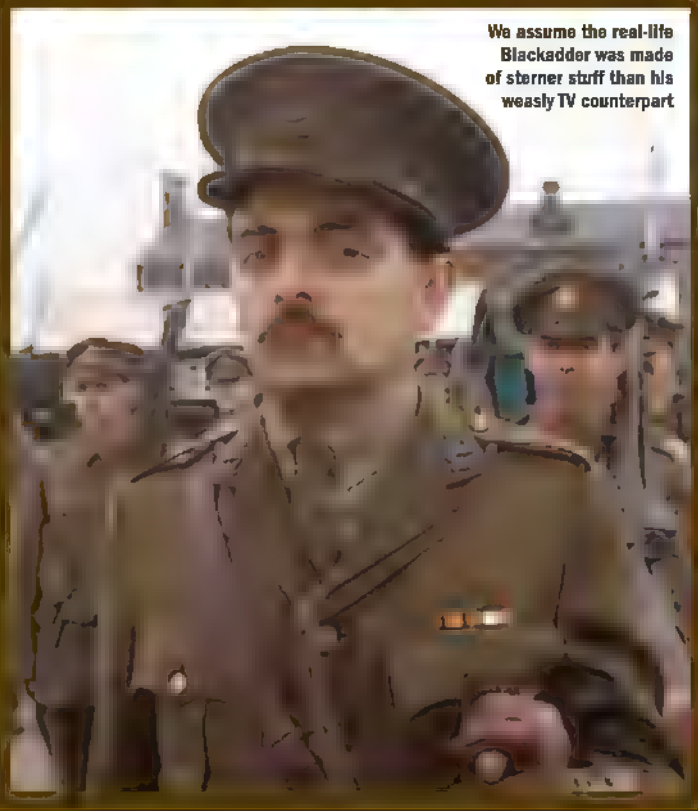
Namesakes discovered on military-records website

Military-genealogy website Forces War Records (www.forces-war-records.co.uk) has discovered in WWI archives that the lead characters in TV series *Blackadder* not only had real-life counterparts, they also had similar ranks.

Blackadder, played by Rowan Atkinson (right), had a namesake – Captain Robert John Blackadder – who fought at the Somme and won the Military Cross. Tim McInnerny played Darling, whose namesake Captain John Clive Darling won a Distinguished Service Order and fought at Mons, Marne, Aisne and Ypres. Hugh Laurie's character George's counterpart was Lieutenant Athelstan Key Durance George who trained as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps. And finally, Tony Robinson's character Baldrick's namesake was Private James Baldrick, who enlisted in the Army Reserves and was called up for service with the British Expeditionary Force. Bizarrely, the real versions also had similar backgrounds – though the real Baldrick, unlike the TV character, could read.

The discoveries were made by 24-year-old military history graduate Tom Bennington, but the archives failed to reveal a General Melchett, played by Stephen Fry – although a General Melchett did make an appearance in World War Two.

BLACKADDER, PLAYED BY ROWAN ATKINSON, [illegible] – CAPTAIN ROBERT JOHN BLACKADDER – WHO FOUGHT AT THE SOMME



We assume the real-life Blackadder was made of sterner stuff than his weasly TV counterpart

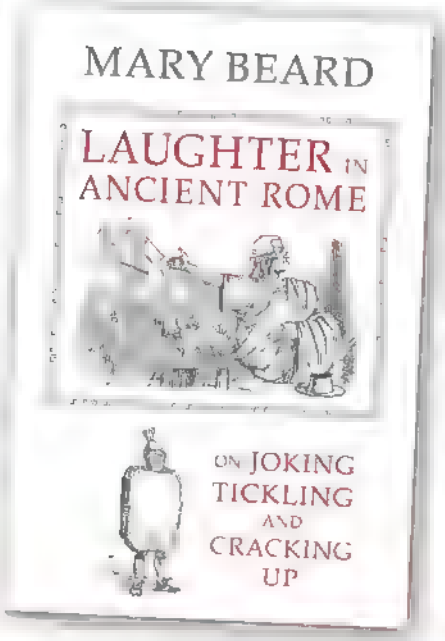
AUTHOR PROVES THAT COMEDY WAS ROOTED IN ROMAN CULTURE

If you happen to have a Roman stashed away somewhere who needs cheering up, Mary Beard's book, *Laughter In Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling And Cracking Up*, is indispensable.

But even if there isn't a Roman in sight, Beard's latest tome is a great read, providing an academic insight into what made Romans laugh – jokes, irony, silliness, sex, even their own clothes. The jokes themselves may not make you laugh, but they show that the language of humour is rooted in Latin and provides the basis of our modern jokes. Interestingly, she writes that while the Romans enjoyed a laugh, there were no Roman words for smiling.

Using an array of Roman writing, including essays and even an old joke book, Beard, Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge, examines whether Rome was an empire full of practical jokes or a world of wit and irony, and identifies the role that comedy played in the law courts, imperial palace and arena. She explores Roman humour from the hilarious to the momentous to the surprising, while tackling wider historical questions.

Laughter In Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling And Cracking Up by Mary Beard is available now, published by University of California Press in hardcover, RRP £19.95.



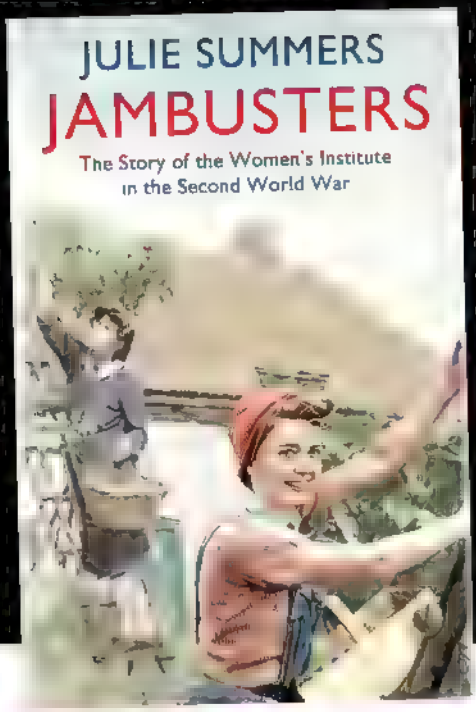
ITV cooks up Jambusters

A new WWII drama will soon be hitting our TV screens after ITV announced its commission of a six-part series, inspired by the book *Jambusters*, written by Julie Summers, the series will be set in a rural Cheshire community and follow a group of inspirational women as the global conflict erupts.

An ITV statement said, "The isolated village couldn't feel further away from the impending bloodshed and battlefields, and yet it isn't immune to the effects of war. As the conflict takes hold and separates women from husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, the characters find themselves under increasing and extraordinary pressure in a rapidly fragmenting world."

Director of Drama for ITV Steve November added, "Multiple strands of plot interweave to create a period drama full of jeopardy and intrigue, but also great humanity and modernity."

The period drama has been written and created by Simon Block, whose previous credits include *Inspector Lewis*. Filming will take place in Cheshire from September to December, but no cast members have yet been announced.



UNDER THE HAMMER

Auction bidders dig deep for sought-after wartime memorabilia

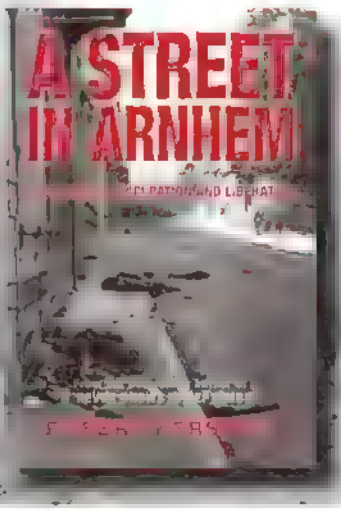
Fancy a 100-year-old biscuit, anyone? A bidder at a Suffolk auction was certainly hungry for this pair of WWI Army-ration biscuits, forking out £290 for the snacks made out of flour, salt and water. The biscuits, dated August 1915 and labelled "used by troops in Suvla Bay", are thought to have been owned by Lt Lionel Bruce Charles, who fought in the Gallipoli/Dardanelles campaign (one biscuit is labelled "Gallipoli", the other "Dardanelles"). Bidding at Lockdales Auctioneers in Martlesham, Suffolk, started at £60 but quickly reached five times that figure. Although rock-hard, the biscuits are apparently still edible, but it's thought they were bought to look at rather than eat.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the pond, one of the most important WWII aviation documents went under the hammer at Bonhams, New York, on 5 June, for a considerably larger sum. The flight log of pilot Brigadier General Paul Tibbets, who flew the Enola Gay, the US B-29 plane famous for dropping an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, was sold for $86,500 (£50,524). The log, which records all the flights in Tibbets' career, includes a report that he spent 12 hours, 15 minutes aboard the aircraft on 6 August, when the atomic bomb "Little Boy" was dropped on Japan.

But it was a D-Day landing ship's US flag that was the auction hero this month, after an unnamed online buyer bid a whopping $386,500 (£225,759) for the battle souvenir at the same Bonhams sale, which was timed to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the D-Day campaign. The star panel of the 48-star ensign is intact, but the striped area has been badly distressed by the weather. The flag, which was flown from the US-built LST 493 that dropped troops on the beaches at Normandy, was given an estimate of $25,000-$35,000, but healthy bidding pushed the price way beyond that.

A major new book by
ROBERT J. KERSHAW

A STREET in ARNHEM
The Agony of Occupation and Liberation



One street... one war... hundreds of unique experiences

PUBLISHED AUGUST 2014

What happens when your street is overwhelmed by a mighty battle not of your making? *A Street in Arnhem* tells the astonishing story of a peaceful Dutch suburb which for nine days was brutalised and destroyed by the battle that raged through its streets.

Robert Kershaw has unearthed new research through interviews, diary accounts and letters to show the battle not only from the viewpoint of the British, Polish and German soldiers fighting in this street, but more importantly through the eyes of the confused and horrified locals.

This is a compelling human story, often heart-rending, as residents struggled to cope as their street was utterly destroyed by conflict. As the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem approaches in September, this is a good time to reflect and remember and, for the very first time, to look at this epic World War 2 battle through the eyes of ordinary people, whether soldiers or civilians.

If you read Kershaw's masterpiece *It Never Snows in September* you shouldn't miss his powerful, moving account of a struggle that still resonates across the decades.

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Events

▶ 26-28 SEPTEMBER
Crank Down
The Yorkshire Military Vehicle Trust's weekend run across the Yorkshire Moors. Includes a full supporting programme of 1940s activities.
www.yorkshiremvt.co.uk

▶ 27-28 SEPTEMBER
Wallington War Weekend
A combination of vintage military vehicles, living-history displays and food with a WWII theme.
Wallington Hall, Northumbria.
01669 620469

▶ 27-28 SEPTEMBER
On The Home Front, 1939-1945
Pop along and meet "Winston Churchill", "General Montgomery" and other military legends at this period celebration of wartime Britain.
Rufford Abbey Park, Nottinghamshire.
www.eventplan.co.uk

▶ 27-28 SEPTEMBER
Pistons & Props
Come for the displays of wartime aircraft, including Spitfires, Tiger Moths and Mustangs, then stay for the classic cars and live music.
Sywell Aerodrome, Northamptonshire.
www.sywellclassic.co.uk

AND DON'T FORGET THESE EVENTS LATER IN THE YEAR...

▶ 2 NOVEMBER
Northern Military Expo
More than 200 trade stands will sell everything from vehicles and parts to militaria, medals and more.
Newark Showground, Notts.
www.northernmilitaryexpo.co.uk

▶ 9 NOVEMBER
National Act of Remembrance
The Royal Family will lay wreaths at the Cenotaph, and there will be a two-gun salute and a veterans' parade.
Horse Guards Parade, London

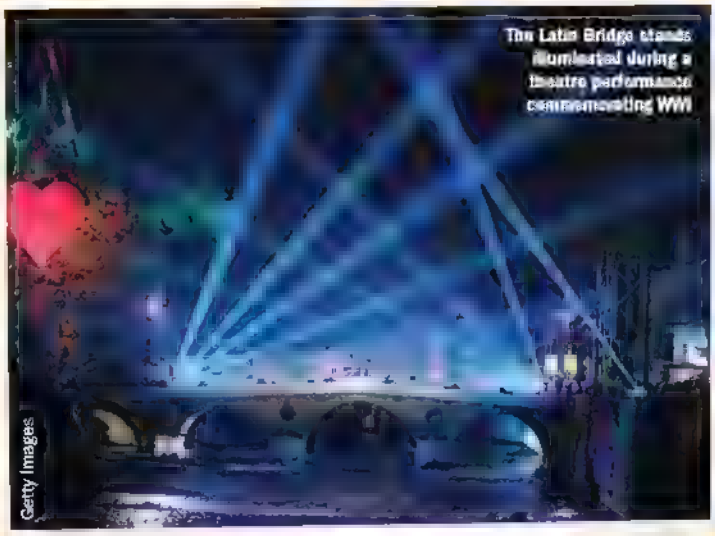
▶ 29-30 NOVEMBER
Birmingham International Tattoo
Experience military bands from around the world, plus dancers, a field-gun competition and motorcycle displays.
National Indoor Arena, Birmingham.
www.birminghamtattoo.co.uk

SARAJEVO'S CENTENARY SHOW

The city of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina recently held a number of events to commemorate the shooting of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by the Bosnian Serb secessionist Gavrilo Princip – the incident that ignited the Great War.

The Vienna Philharmonic performed in the afternoon, then a midnight musical took place on the Latin Bridge near the site of the shooting.

However, the city's population remain divided over the events of 28 June 1914: to Serbs, Princip was a nationalist hero striking a blow against the hated Austro-Hungarian empire. But for Bosnians, his actions ignited an unnecessary war that created the conditions for the rise of Nazism. That, in turn, led to the Second World War and set the scene for the horrific civil wars of the 1990s.


The Latin Bridge stands illuminated during a theatre performance commemorating WWI
Getty Images

The commemorations in Sarajevo were boycotted by Serbian officials, who instead put on a re-enactment of the shooting and subsequent trial.

TO SERBS, GAVRILO PRINCIP WAS A NATIONALIST HERO STRIKING A BLOW AGAINST THE HATED AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE

and unveiled a bronze statue to Princip in the Serb-dominated east of the city. Prayers were also said in Princip's honour in his hometown, Obljaj.

In the UK, the Queen honoured WWI volunteers by attending the Drumhead Service of Remembrance at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The service was led by the Bishop of London and held 100 years to the day after the Archduke's death.

Imperial War Museum completes £40m facelift

New atrium and WWI-themed galleries now open

After a six-month closure and a £40million refurbishment, London's Imperial War Museum re-opened in July to coincide with the centenary of the outbreak of WWI. The centrepiece of the new-look museum is an atrium – the former sepulchral hall – designed by Foster + Partners. It features an array of military exhibits, ranging from a Spitfire and a Harrier Jump Jet suspended from the ceiling, to V1 and V2 rockets, artillery pieces, tanks and vehicles arrayed around its walls, like a giant war-themed wine rack. In all, there are 400 pieces on display in the atrium, 60 of which have never been seen before.

The museum also has a number of new WWI galleries featuring more than 1,300 weapons, uniforms and pieces of military equipment, plus a range of artwork and photos. The latter include shots of soldiers from various nations across the British Empire, and show the war as a truly global conflict. There's even a recreation trench, with a Sopwith Camel and a Mark IV tank looming overhead.

The new galleries were unveiled by Prince William, the patron of the museum, who commented that they vividly bring home the brutal realities of the First World War, and demonstrate why it's still relevant a hundred years later.

LETTERS

Make your thoughts and opinions known by writing to *History Of War*. Email historyofwar@anthem-publishing.com or send letters to the address below

NOTES ON 'NAM

Dear Sir,
Concerning the Tet Offensive article in your May issue, I understand that the writer was trying to be objective and present both sides of the issue. But as I read it from the perspective of an American college student of draft age in 1968, I felt that the article neglected the emotions of the times. General William Westmoreland had just delivered an incredibly overly optimistic report on the progress of the war to Congress in November 1967. Then, less than three months later, the Viet Cong took the second-largest city of South Vietnam, Huế, and captured large sections of the capital, Saigon. What would be said if an American guerrilla force captured Chicago and large sections of Washington DC or New York? The body counts the author referred to were widely believed to be fabricated. In the cynical view of the times, "Once they're dead, they're all VC." The higher the body count, the more likely the officer who reported it would be promoted. Polishing the resumé with a year's combat experience. We referred to it as "the one and done mindset".
Mark Ehrlich *Houston, Texas*

CASUALTIES OF WAR

Dear Sir,
I've just finished reading my father's copy of the August issue of *History of War*, with its focus on the First World War. As a young historian (I'm studying history at university), I was taken aback by the levels of carnage endured by the men who fought during the Great War, and the bravery they exhibited in the face of death or severe injury. How terrifying it must have been to witness the shelling and the gas attacks that World War One has become associated with. Hard as it must be to write about such things, I hope you continue to educate and illuminate.
Vanessa Peacock *via email*

GREAT GUNS

Dear Sir,
Thank you for the start of your series on Weapons That Have Changed History (issue six, August 2014). I was particularly interested in the piece about the Colt M1911 automatic pistol, which I believe to be a legendary gun that has played a vital role in military history. My grandfather fought in Vietnam and swore by his M1911; he even bought me a replica for my 18th birthday. Please continue with this series, and do include other era-defining handguns
David Bishop *Cambridge, Massachusetts*

MORE CONFLICTS, PLEASE

Dear Sir,
Well done on your recent feature on the D-Day landings (issue four, June 2014) and – just as important – on your follow-up feature on the battles that took place in the *bocage* (issue five, July 2014). Oh, so often, people assume that once the D-Day landings had taken place, the Second World War was effectively over in France. But of course, there was a great deal of fighting, suffering and dying to come as the Allies made their way towards Paris and then on to Germany to end the conflict once and for all. I would like to see further coverage of the war after D-Day in your magazine. As an aside, I would also like to see you expand your coverage of conflicts other than the two World Wars. I appreciate that the First and Second World Wars were the most significant historical events of all time, but there's so much coverage on television and in other magazines that we're in danger of believing that these wars were the be all and end all. So please expand your remit even further!
Brian Peabody *via email*

As Brian points out, the Second World War didn't end on D-Day

Cover image Getty Digital manipulation Andy Saunders

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DISTRIBUTION **Marketforce (UK) Ltd**
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Storm in Stalingrad

Second World War: The battle for the Soviet city of Stalingrad from August 1942 to February 1943 became a symbol for the entire struggle on the Eastern Front. Adolf Hitler staked more and more on its capture, but Vasily Chuikov's 62nd Army refused to yield...

Devastated buildings can be seen in the background as soldiers advance across the city. Up to two million men and women died during the seven-month battle

BACKSTORY
In an attempt to gain a foothold on the Eastern Front, Germany had invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, breaking the non-aggression pact signed by the two countries in 1939. The Nazis had initially made rapid progress, but their endeavours had left their resources depleted. So Hitler set in motion a two-pronged attack: on oil-rich Baku, and the city of Stalingrad

Stalingrad, originally known as Tsaritsyn, had prospered in the 19th Century as a trading town on the Volga river. During the Russian Civil War (1918-21), the Reds had triumphed there. Joseph Stalin's contribution to that success was marginal but, once he'd achieved supreme power in 1925 and named the city after himself, the history books were manipulated and his role in the victory enhanced. By the 1930s, he was credited as having played a part in both the October Revolution of 1917 and the triumph at Tsaritsyn. Stalingrad was thus indelibly associated with Stalin and the Russian Revolution, a dimension that influenced both Adolf Hitler and Stalin's approach to the Battle of Stalingrad.

Stalingrad's odd shape [illegible] by the traditional German method of encirclement

By 1941, Stalingrad was a city of some 600,000 people. It had played a role in Stalin's industrial drive of the 1930s, and its location on the Volga ensured that it was a vital cog in the Soviet war economy. It was a valuable political, economic, communications and psychological objective. However, if the Red Army was to fight a major battle of annihilation, Stalingrad – like Moscow in 1941 – was an ideal place to do so. The uneven terrain west of the city was not ideal for rapid movement. Stalingrad itself, with its sprawling apartment blocks and factories, ensured that agile combat dependent on the smooth integration of air power, armour and infantry – the secret of German success – would be next to impossible. The city's odd shape also undermined the Wehrmacht's ability to defeat the Red Army by the traditional German method of encirclement. As it nestled on the western bank of the Volga, Stalingrad stretched for 25 miles but was only five miles wide. The Volga, more than half a mile wide, meant that if the Wehrmacht wanted to encircle the city, a major amphibious operation would be necessary. This ensured that, unless there was a dramatic collapse by the Red Army, German troops would be forced into a prolonged frontal assault.

The Mamayev Kurgan, an ancient Tartar burial mound, loomed over central Stalingrad. It was marked on military maps as Point 102.0 and provided a magnificent observation site – so much so that in weeks of hand-to-hand fighting, neither side would concede it. The northern end of the city was Stalingrad's industrial heart. Here lay the Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory and the Barrikady Ordnance Factory. In front of the Barrikady lay the Silikat Factory. Due south lay the Red October steelworks. Stalingrad's workers lived in huge settlements that, together with the factories, amounted to a massive fortified position. The southern end of the city was defined by the Tsaritsa river, which flowed east into the Volga beneath Stalingrad-1 railway station. In the southern suburbs of Minina and Yelshanka, General Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army confronted Major-General Mikhail Shumilov's 64th Army, which was protecting 62nd Army's left flank. A few miles east lay the Volga, presenting both the threat of a watery grave and a source of survival for the Soviet troops.

Greeted with derision

General Friedrich Paulus and his divisional commanders remained confident – perhaps too confident in the prowess of German arms. 6th Army had chased its Soviet foe across the Steppe, and the idea of defeat at Stalingrad was greeted with derision. Equally, many Soviet commanders doubted the Red Army's ability to defeat the Wehrmacht, including General A I Lopatin, commander of 62nd Army, charged with defending the city. On 12 September 1942, Lieutenant General Vasily Chuikov replaced Lopatin. Since June 1941, Chuikov had acted as the Soviet military attaché in China but, upon his return to active ▶

Getty Images

command in June 1942, he had inflicted a tactical setback on 4th Panzer Army as the commander of 64th Army. Chuikov was a bloody-minded individual who was more of a natural fighter than his German counterpart, Paulus. A scruffy, ill-tempered character, he led from the front with commitment allied to an acute "feel" for battle. Throughout September and October 1942, Chuikov's nerve held in the darkest days of the struggle, as he eventually led his men to victory.

Chuikov believed that he had discerned a German weakness of great relevance to fighting in an urban environment. He had noticed that until their air power attacked, the armour hung back, and that until the panzers went in, the infantry held back. Once in battle, they demonstrated great cohesion; however, while such a *modus operandi* was ideal for the open steppe, it was alien to the confines of a city.

As Soviet troops reeled under the German onslaught, Chuikov was in danger of losing control of the battle

A 50mm mortar of 13th Guards Rifle Division fires on German positions in Stalingrad. Much of the city was reduced to rubble by the German bombardment and air attacks

Chuikov concluded that 62nd Army must break the German chain of operations. The Luftwaffe's ability to roam the skies had to be undermined to force German armour and infantry to come forwards on their own. His tactical solution was to order the Soviet infantry to "hug" their German counterparts to deny the Luftwaffe its usual opportunity to devastate the enemy's front line. The Luftwaffe remained a huge influence on the battle, paralysing daytime movement and communications, but it was not the decisive influence it had been in previous battles. Chuikov's orders gave 62nd Army a valuable tactical ploy but, on 14 September 1942, Soviet troops found themselves scrambling to survive.

First attacks

6th Army's first assault was led by Lieutenant-General Walther von Seydlitz-Kurzbach's LI Corps in a two-pronged assault towards the north and centre of the city. Three infantry divisions (71st, 76th and 295th) spearheaded the south-easterly drive of LI Corps. On the southern bank of the Tsaritsa, 24th Panzer and 94th Infantry Divisions attacked through the Minina suburbs while, to their right, 14th Panzer and 29th Motorised Infantry Divisions moved through the Yelshanka district. The aim was to encircle and destroy their prospective opponents before uniting for a drive on 62nd Army's vital landing stage on the Volga. If successful, 62nd Army would be isolated on the western bank of the river and at the mercy of 6th Army. By afternoon, Chuikov's command position on the Mamayev Kurgan had been destroyed. As Soviet troops reeled under the German onslaught, Chuikov was in danger of losing control of the battle. However, certain that the German objective was the landing stage, he committed his last available tactical reserve – a tank brigade with just 19 tanks – to block the German advance. Simultaneously, Chuikov informed his commander, Colonel-General Andrei Yeremenko, that unless he received reserves, 62nd Army would be defeated.

As dusk fell on 14 September 1942, Major-General Aleksandr Rodimtsev's 13th Guards Division lined up on the eastern bank of the Volga. As the sound of battle echoed across the river, few of Rodimtsev's men could ignore the implications of what lay ahead. The 13th Guards counted 10,000 men and, at 7pm, received formal orders to cross the Volga. The objective was to secure the landing stage, retake the Mamayev Kurgan and deny the Germans possession of Stalingrad 1 railway station. As the division landed, the lead battalions encountered German infantry. But after a short yet intense fight, 13th Guards Division moved quickly to the south-eastern slopes of the Mamayev Kurgan and dug in at Stalingrad 1 station. At dawn on 15 September, 71st and 295th Infantry Divisions attacked 13th Guards Division, while, to the south of the Tsaritsa, 4th Panzer Army smashed into the Minina and Yelshanka suburbs. The fighting raged: Stalingrad 1 railway station changed hands 15 times. On 16 September, 13th Guards Division temporarily drove back 71st Infantry

Key figures

JOSEPH STALIN
Following the death of Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin in 1924, Stalin outmanoeuvred his rivals to take control of the party. By 1929, he was the supreme leader of the Soviet Union, a position he held until his death following a stroke in 1953.

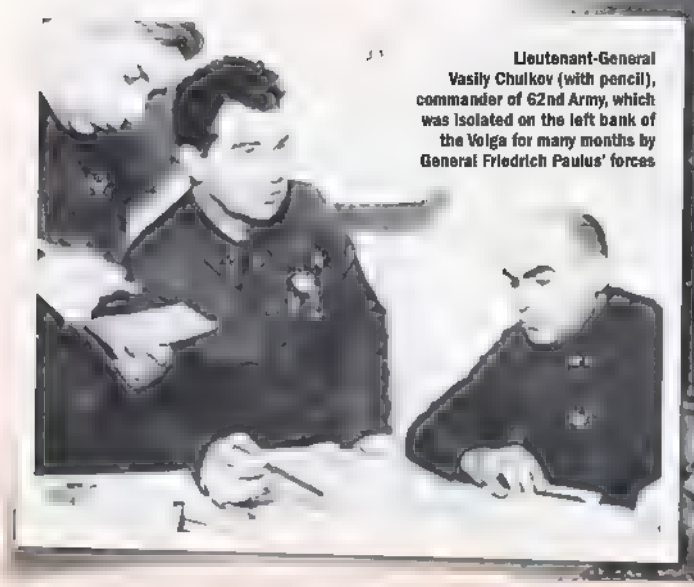
VASILY CHUIKOV
Commander of 62nd Army, Chuikov was tasked with defending Stalingrad from the German forces. His tactic of "hugging the enemy" – fighting in close quarters – minimised the enemy's superior firepower and made things difficult for Luftwaffe bombers.

FRIEDRICH PAULUS
Paulus helped co-ordinate the plan to invade the Soviet Union and, as General of 6th Army, led some 250,000 men towards Stalingrad. Following the German surrender, he was taken prisoner and later gave evidence at the Nuremberg Trials.

ERICH VON MANSTEIN
Held in high esteem by both the Axis forces and the Allies, von Manstein was appointed commander of the newly formed Army Group Don, which was tasked with mounting a relief operation (Winter Storm) to reinforce the German hold on Stalingrad.

GEORGY ZHUKOV
Zhukov was made Deputy Commander in Chief of the Soviet Army in August 1942. Along with Aleksandr Vasilevsky, he planned the Stalingrad counter-offensive Operation Uranus, which encircled 6th Army. Zhukov is the most decorated officer in Soviet history.

WILHELM HOFFMAN
While he was only a soldier (94th Infantry Division, 6th Army), Hoffman played a key role at Stalingrad by chronicling the battle in his journal. It remains one of the few unaltered German accounts of WWII, and is often quoted in books and TV programmes.



Lieutenant-General Vasily Chuikov (with pencil), commander of 62nd Army, which was isolated on the left bank of the Volga for many months by General Friedrich Paulus' forces

The aftermath of a Stuka attack on Stalingrad seen from one of the attacking aircraft on 2 October 1942. The Volga river is visible on the left of the photograph

Division and cleared German troops from the vicinity of the landing stages However, on 17 September, the balance of the battle tipped in favour of the Germans as 76th Infantry Division entered the fight. By 19 September, 71st Infantry Division had secured the station and had the landing stage under fire. Rodimtsev's 13th Guards Division, which had stood 10,000-strong, now numbered just 2,700, but Soviet defences, although buckled, had not broken.

STALINGRAD ON SCREEN
A NEW FILM ABOUT THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD, SIMPLY TITLED *STALINGRAD*, HAS JUST BEEN RELEASED ON DVD. SEE OUR REVIEW ON P94.

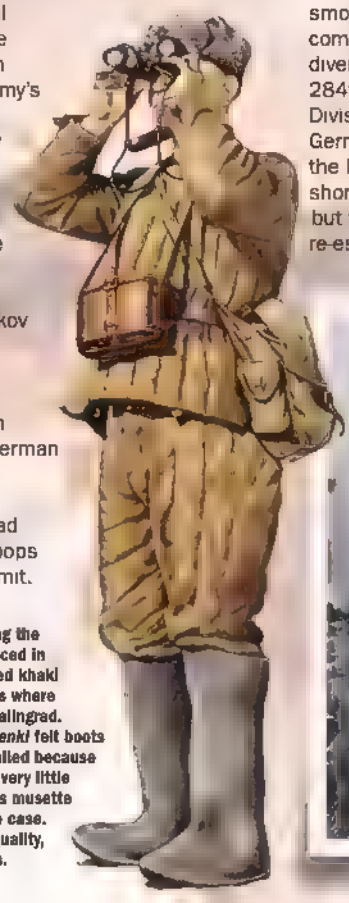
Collapsing buildings

The fight on the Mamayev Kurgan was equally intense. The German 295th Infantry Division had made a massive effort to drive Colonel I. P. Solugub's 112th Division off this vital tactical position. Its capture would give the Germans clear observation of both the left and right wings of 62nd Army's defence, and permit the accurate direction of air strikes and artillery fire. Chuikov later recalled that, on the night of 15/16 September, "We were all concerned about the fate of the Mamayev Kurgan. If the enemy took it, he could command the whole city and the Volga."

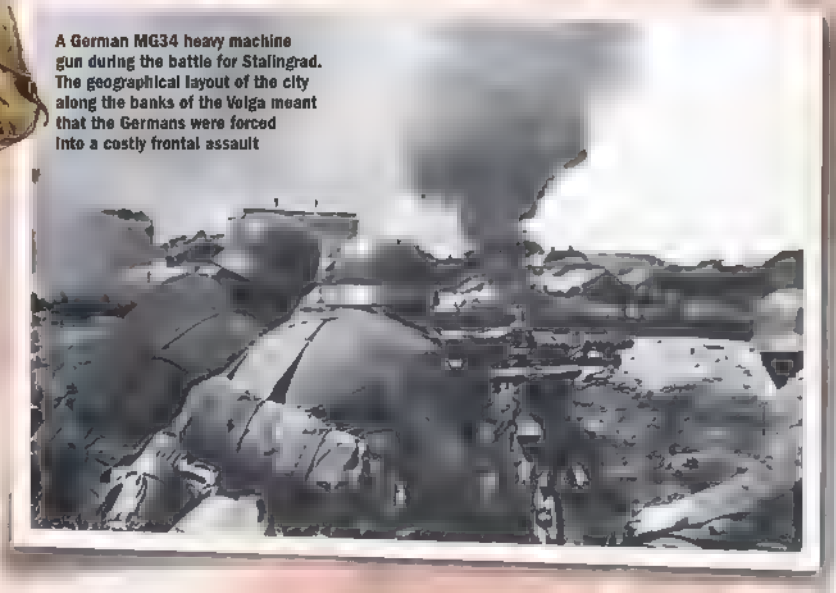
At dawn on 16 September, Chuikov ordered a Soviet attack on the summit of the Mamayev Kurgan. Two Soviet regiments fought their way to the summit, but were driven off by a combined Luftwaffe and German infantry attack. Nevertheless, the Soviet infantry held on and by 20 September, the German assault had eased, with Soviet and German troops camped on either side of the summit.

To the south of the Mamayev Kurgan, 13th Guards Division had lost its fight for Stalingrad-1 railway station. 62nd Army's left flank was folding as the German 71st Infantry Division sought to swing north to meet 76th and 295th Infantry Divisions. Its aim was to encircle and annihilate the remnants of 13th Guards Division. In the early hours of 23 September, 2,000 men of Lieutenant-Colonel Nikolay Batyuk's 284th Rifle Division crossed the Volga and fought their way into the city. They were to support 13th Guards Division and bolster Colonel V. A. Gorishny's 95th Division on the Mamayev Kurgan. Ironically, as Batyuk's men landed, a Luftwaffe air strike provided cover as smoke, dust and collapsing buildings combined to serve as a temporary diversion. At 10am on 23 September, 284th Siberian and 13th Guards Divisions counter-attacked and drove the German 71st Infantry Division away from the landing stage. Their drive was halted short of Stalingrad-1 railway station, but their efforts enabled Chuikov to re-establish some control. However, if 62nd Army's tactical position had been stabilised north of the Tsaritsa, on the southern bank it was deteriorating in the face of 4th Panzer Army's assault.

The objective of 4th Panzer Army was to reach the Volga and split Chuikov's 62nd Army from Shumilov's 64th Army. On the extreme right, 14th Panzer and 29th Motorised Infantry Divisions had split the two Soviet armies. However, 24th Panzer and 94th Infantry Divisions faced tougher opposition. The combined efforts of the Soviet 35th Guards Division with 42nd Infantry Brigade and 92nd Naval Infantry Brigade ensured that a bitter struggle developed for the dominant local landmark, a huge concrete grain silo close to the Volga. The silo was the lynchpin of the Soviet defence south of the Tsaritsa, offering excellent observation as well as being a powerful defensive bastion. For several days, 30 Soviet marines and 20 guardsmen held it against three German divisions, but eventually it was taken. Wilhelm Hoffman of the German 94th Infantry Division recalled, "Our battalion, plus tanks, is attacking the elevator, from which smoke is pouring – the grain in ▶



▶ **RED ARMY OFFICER** This officer is wearing the new-pattern winter uniform that was introduced in 1941. By late 1942, his *telogreika* – a padded khaki jacket – was in common usage, even in areas where the winters were not that severe, such as Stalingrad. He wears the matching padded trousers, *valenki* felt boots and "fish-fur" cap, or *shapka-ushank* – so-called because the material it was manufactured from bore very little relation to real fur. He carries a small canvas musette bag, which would have included a small map case. Soviet binoculars were of remarkably good quality, and he probably carries a pair of 8X30 BPCs.



A German MG34 heavy machine gun during the battle for Stalingrad. The geographical layout of the city along the banks of the Volga meant that the Germans were forced into a costly frontal assault

Monument to a titanic struggle

No matter where you stand in Volgograd (as Stalingrad is known today), it's hard to miss the Mamayev Kurgan, the massive hill that looms imperiously over the city. And that's the way it should be, because the landmark provides a permanent and poignant reminder of one of the bloodiest battles in history; a battle that saw hundreds of thousands of men and women lose their lives, and provided the Allies with a crucial tactical advantage on the Eastern Front.

Marked on military maps as Point 102.0, Mamayev Kurgan (the name in Russian means "tumulus of Mamai") provides a magnificent vantage point over the city, and was therefore seen by both the Germans and the Soviets as a vital strategic stronghold. Between September 1942 and the end of the battle in February 1943, the hill changed hands many times, with countless casualties suffered on both sides. Following the battle, it was discovered that the soil on the hill had been so thoroughly churned by shellfire that it contained between 500 and 1,250 splinters of metal per square metre, and even today it's possible to find fragments of bone and metal buried on the site.

Also buried on the hill are Vasily Chuikov, commander of the Soviet 62nd Army, and sniper Vasily Zaytsev, who is reckoned to have killed 225 Axis soldiers during the Battle of Stalingrad, and who was portrayed by Jude Law in the 2001 film *Enemy At The Gates*.

In 1967, Soviet artist Yevgeny Vuchetich was commissioned to design a sculpture for the top of the hill. Known as "The Motherland Calls!", the statue of a woman raising a sword in her right hand was, at the time of its installation, the largest free-standing sculpture in the world, and it remains the tallest sculpture of a woman in the world. Two-hundred steps from the bottom of the hill to the foot of the statue commemorate the 200 days that the Battle of Stalingrad lasted.

The claustrophobic nature of street fighting in a ruined city made the Wehrmacht's large-scale, multi-unit operations a liability rather than an asset

WBLOOD ON THE STREETS

STALINGRAD (THEN KNOWN AS TSARITSYN) WAS THE SCENE OF ANOTHER FIERCE CONFLICT DURING THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR BETWEEN BOLSHEVIK FORCES AND THE WHITE ARMY (1918-1921). MORE THAN 200,000 PEOPLE WERE KILLED.

it is burning; the Russians seem to have set light to it themselves. Barbarism. The battalion is suffering heavy losses. There are not more than 60 men left in each company. The elevator is occupied not by men, but by devils that no flames or bullets can destroy."

The battle for the elevator, first engaged on 17 September, raged until 22 September, when a relieved Hoffman gasped that, "Russian resistance in the elevator has been broken. Our troops are advancing towards the Volga. We found about 40 Russian dead in the elevator building... The whole of our battalion has as many men as a regular company. Our old soldiers have never experienced such bitter fighting before."

As the siege fell, the Soviet position deteriorated. 35th Guards Division had been worn down, while the remaining two combined brigades were short of rest, ammunition, food and water. By 26 September, 24th Panzer Division had reached the Volga and brought 62nd Army's main landing stage under fire. In tactical terms, even if the Germans had not driven 62nd Army into the Volga, 6th Army had made substantial gains. Hoth's 4th Panzer Army had shouldered 64th Army aside, thus isolating Chuikov's 62nd Army. It had also gained control of a five-mile section of the Volga bank south of the Tsaritsa. In central Stalingrad, German forces had captured the rail station, driven the Soviets back to the Volga's edge and pushed them off the summit of the Mamayev Kurgan. The Red Army's counter-attacks within the city and on 6th Army's northern flank had been defeated, while 62nd Army's bridgehead on the western bank of the Volga was now confined to the industrial areas of Stalingrad.

Yet, as German commanders and soldiers surveyed the destruction of Stalingrad, it did not feel like a victory. The Red Army's tenacity had shocked many German soldiers, who quickly realised that the Soviets were determined to fight to the death. The Wehrmacht had demonstrated its outstanding fighting qualities in the open field, where its ability to integrate armour, air power and infantry with rapid movement and bold leadership had won it a stream of victories. However, the claustrophobic nature of street fighting

Soviet sailors – who fought alongside their army colleagues and also operated the Volga river-crossing craft – are seen here joining the Communist Party. Only families of party members were notified if their son was killed

The Battle of Stalingrad timeline

22 JUNE

Germany launches Operation Barbarossa, with the intention of taking control of the Soviet Union in a matter of months using blitzkrieg tactics.

3 APRIL

After major setbacks, and with German resources depleted, Adolf Hitler lays out plans for a new campaign, "Case Blue", aimed at taking control of the oil-rich Caucasus region, including Stalingrad.

28 JUNE

Case Blue begins, with 4th Panzer Army marching towards the city of Voronezh, seen as a key staging point for an attack on Stalingrad. Voronezh is under complete Axis control by 24 July.

25 JULY

Before invading Stalingrad, the German Luftwaffe embarks on a six-day bombing campaign of Soviet ships on the Volga river. The river is seen as vital for bringing supplies into the city.

1 AUGUST

Andrei Yeremenko is named commander of the South-Eastern Front. He and commissar Nikita Khrushchev are tasked with planning Stalingrad's defence. They appoint Vasily Chuikov to lead that defence with 62nd Army.

23 AUGUST

As the German 6th Army, under General Friedrich Paulus, reaches the outskirts of Stalingrad, the Luftwaffe bombs the city. Many buildings are destroyed, while the Soviets lose more than 200 planes.

13 SEPTEMBER

German ground forces launch their first attacks on Stalingrad. Fierce fighting ensues as they wrestle Soviet troops for control of the Mamayev Kurgan and the Stalingrad-1 railway station.

.n a ruined city made the Wehrmacht's large-scale, multi-unit operations a liability rather than an asset.

The ability of the Wehrmacht to devolve command down to divisional commanders had given it the agility and speed to humiliate its opponents in manoeuvre warfare. If this key German principle was to be retained in Stalingrad, however, authority had to be delegated to regimental, even battalion, commanders. On the other hand, as the battle of Stalingrad developed into a continuous struggle between hundreds of small units, it became incompatible with a single, decisive victory. In their attempt to deliver a victory on this scale, senior German commanders undermined the flexibility that had played such a key role in earlier triumphs. By persistently planning the conduct of operations – even within a city – around the coordination of several division-sized units, the commanders inadvertently imposed upon 6th Army the positional and attritional battle they were seeking to avoid.

Brilliantly disguised

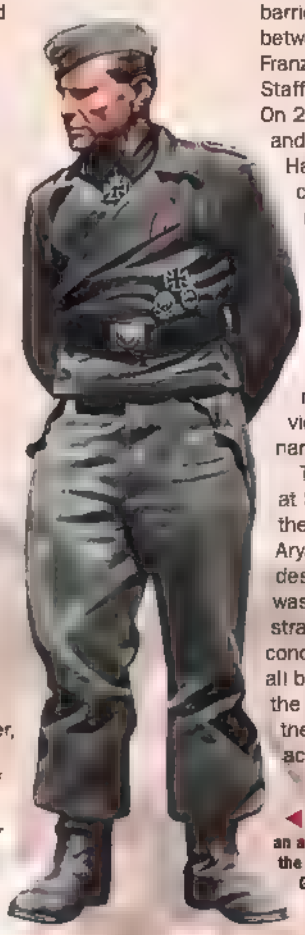
The heavily centralised Soviet command system had struggled to cope with the speed of German operations in open country, but adapted with greater success to the peculiar military environment that was Stalingrad. 62nd Army's isolation on the western bank of the Volga actually gave Chuikov an unusual degree of tactical freedom while, at the operational and strategic level, the South-Eastern Front and Stavka provided the resources Chuikov dispensed with the customary organisational units of division, brigade and regiment. The basic Soviet fighting unit became the "shock group" of 50-80 men, who moved with a speed and flexibility that was immediately noted by German troops. Soviet tanks did not attempt elaborate manoeuvres, but acted as armoured bulwarks, often brilliantly disguised in the rubble of ruined buildings.

These tactics, in conjunction with the Soviet artillery on the eastern bank, and the Luftwaffe's inability to close the Volga, were to play a critical role in frustrating German hopes of a rapid victory. By 26 September 1942, however, the Wehrmacht remained confident, if no longer arrogant, in its assumption of victory. As the Germans launched their second major assault on 27 September 1942, few Soviet soldiers thought of victory, rather mere survival.

THE MAN OF STEEL

JOSEPH STALIN'S REAL SURNAME WAS DJUGASVILI BUT, DURING A SPELL IN PRISON, HE ADOPTED THE NAME STALIN ("MAN OF STEEL") AS HE FELT THAT IT ENHANCED HIS IMAGE.

A Soviet mortar team in action. By 26 September 1942, German forces had captured the railway station in central Stalingrad and had driven the defenders back to the Volga's edge



As Paulus' 6th Army prepared for another encounter on Stalingrad's barricades, the latent, simmering conflict between Hitler and Colonel-General Franz Halder, Chief of the Army General Staff, exploded into open acrimony. On 24 September, Halder was sacked and replaced by General Kurt Zeitzler. Halder had long resented Hitler's capricious military insights, and his inability to see beyond Stalingrad. To Halder, a battle of annihilation on the Volga – which, even if victorious, was likely to be indecisive in strategic terms – was military madness. However, the more Halder voiced his doubts, the more obsessed Hitler became with victory. Stalin's city – the one he had named for himself – was to be taken.

That was Hitler's strategy. Victory at Stalingrad would demonstrate the superior racial qualities of the Aryan over the Slav, thus inducing the destruction of the Soviet Union. Hitler was descending into the ideological straitjacket that increasingly made the conduct of rational military operations all but impossible. It's ironic that, as the Führer denied his commanders the flexibility they had become accustomed to, Stalin allowed his senior commanders, such as Georgy Zhukov, Aleksandr Vasilevsky, Konstantin Rokossovsky and Nikolai Vatutin, greater scope to display their talents.

As Paulus redeployed the main body of 6th Army to the centre and north of the city, the full complement of 284th Siberian Division made its way across the Volga. It was integrated into the Soviet line between the Mamayev Kurgan and the Red October steel works. The Red Army's ability to provide 62nd Army with supplies and men from the eastern shore was a critical factor at Stalingrad. As Paulus' 6th Army and Hoth's 4th Panzer Army bled, Chuikov's 62nd Army was nourished and sustained by the Volga naval flotilla under the command of Rear Admiral Dmitry Rogachev. His force included hundreds of civilian craft, and this miniature naval armada fought a constant battle of attrition with the Luftwaffe. As it delivered thousands of tonnes of food and ammunition, and men to the western bank, all manner of fishing craft played a deadly game of cat and mouse with Manfred von Richthofen's Air Fleet 4. A daytime crossing was suicidal, but night brought the risk of collisions with other craft or sunken wrecks moving in the Volga's dark currents.

The intimate local knowledge of the river possessed by Rogachev's patchwork crews proved invaluable in sustaining 62nd Army, but it would have ▶

◀ **WEHRMACHT OFFICER** A German Sergeant of an assault artillery regiment. He has been awarded the Knight's Cross, Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Class, General Assault Badge and Wound Badge.

1942

30 SEPTEMBER
In a speech at the Berlin Sportpalast, Adolf Hitler declares that German forces will never leave Stalingrad.

14 OCTOBER
In a renewed effort to weaken Soviet resistance, the Luftwaffe flies 2,000 sorties, dropping around 550 tons of bombs on Red Army positions.

19 NOVEMBER
The Soviet forces launch Operation Uranus, a major counter-offensive designed to exploit the Germans' inadequate winter resources and finally drive them out of the Caucasus region.

24 NOVEMBER
With the German 6th Army surrounded, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein sends a message to Hitler, advising him that they should not attempt to break out, and that, with reinforcements, they can hold out.

12 DECEMBER
Following von Manstein's advice, the Germans launch Operation Winter Storm, with 4th Panzer Army attempting to break the Soviet encirclement. The plan fails.

29 JANUARY
Seven days after the last German-controlled airfield is taken by the Soviets, cutting off their supplies, further attacks split Paulus' 6th Army into two pockets of men.

2 FEBRUARY
Ignoring Hitler's order to commit suicide, Paulus – now a Field Marshal – surrenders, effectively ending the battle. Up to a hundred thousand German soldiers are taken prisoner.

4 The second assault is supported by XVI Panzer Corps of 60th Motorised and 16th Panzer Division attacking from the north.
16 PZ
RYNOK
DZERZHINSKY TRACTOR FACTORY
60 MOT
FRONTLINE, 26 SEPT 1942
BARRIKADY FACTORY
388
100
76
71
295
3 In the second phase of the battle on 27 September, the Germans shift their main effort into the factory district in an effort to capture the landing stages behind them.
1 LI Corps of 76, 71 and 295 Infantry Divisions launches its first assault on the city on 14 September in an attempt to capture the Mamayev Kurgan and the central landing stage.
The Battle of Stalingrad
23 August 1942 – 2 February 1943

6 Throughout October, the Germans maintain their pressure in the factory district, bringing 90 per cent of the city under their control. The last major German attack begins on 11 November. Eight days later, the Soviets launch Operation Uranus, cutting off 6th Army in the city.

5 Although the 62nd Army HQ is on the eastern side of the river, Chuikov's command post remains in Soviet-held Stalingrad throughout.

2 4th Panzer Army attacks in support of the initial assault in the south of the city, but is held up by fanatical resistance around the grain silo.

Fighting in the rubble of Stalingrad. The city was a hazardous battlefield: as well as snipers, artillery and aircraft attacks, soldiers had to be wary of collapsing buildings.

counted for nothing if Soviet troops had failed to defend the crucial landing stages dotted along the western shore of the Volga. This was the crucible of the Battle of Stalingrad. If the Luftwaffe severed the Volga artery, then 62nd Army's fate was inevitable. If Rogachev's men – Stalingrad's unsung heroes – could defy the Luftwaffe, Paulus' jaded 6th Army would wither while Chuikov's 62nd Army would survive the ordeal. The Luftwaffe retained its tactical superiority over the Red Air Force to the bitter end at Stalingrad, but could not close the Volga. This played a key role in the Soviets' overall victory.

Speed and agility

As 62nd Army's reconnaissance network detected the German 6th Army's preparations to attack, the impudent Chuikov planned a counter-attack on the Mamayev Kurgan. This was scheduled for dawn on 27 September, and Chuikov's formal orders stressed, "I again warn the commanders of all units and formations not to carry out operations in battle by whole units like companies and battalions. The offensive should be organised chiefly on the basis of small groups with tommy guns, hand grenades, bottles of incendiary mixture and anti-tank rifles." Chuikov understood that the deadly intimacy of fighting at such close quarters made it imperative that Soviet fighting power must be organised around small, heavily armed infantry teams that could operate with speed and agility.

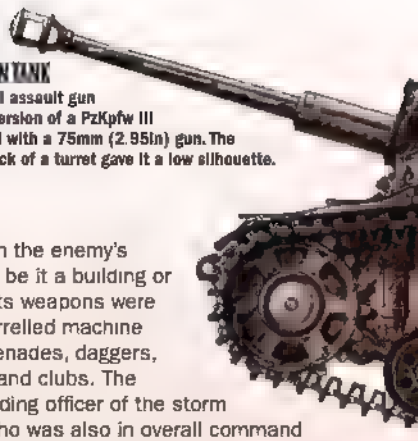
During the Battle of Stalingrad, the shock group evolved as the main Soviet formation. It was a semi-autonomous unit designed to act independently in pursuit of objectives that were devolved down the chain of command from Chuikov. A shock group consisted of 50-80 men, depending on the nature of its mission, and was broken down into three sub-units: the storm group, the reinforcement group and the reserve group.

The storm group was usually made up of ten men and was the spearhead of the shock group. Its role was to breach the enemy's position, be it a building or trench. Its weapons were short-barrelled machine guns, grenades, daggers, shovels and clubs. The commanding officer of the storm group, who was also in overall command of the shock group, carried a signal rocket to be fired when the storm group was inside the enemy position. This signal would activate the reinforcement group of 20-25 men, whose mission was to deliver the killing blow to the enemy troops and secure the objective against immediate counter-attack – a German speciality. The reinforcement group was very heavily armed, being equipped with light and heavy machine guns, grenades, daggers, anti-tank rifles and mortars, as well as explosives. A Soviet reinforcement group always contained at least two combat engineers, who had a critical role in demolition and the erection of rudimentary defensive obstacles once the target was secure.

Once into the enemy position, the reinforcement group was naturally followed by the reserve group of 30-50 men, to be used as a blocking force against counter-attack and as a handy source of combat reserves should the first two groups experience sustained opposition. It was their responsibility to establish an all-round defence. Machine-gunners, mortar and anti-tank crews would quickly deploy on the ground floor, while other soldiers scrambled onto the upper floor to gain better observation and establish fields of fire. Combat engineers would then lay mines to channel enemy attacks into these fields of fire.

The aim of the shock group was to hold its objective for up to 48 hours, by which time it could be integrated into the overall regimental, divisional and army position. This was the method by which Chuikov's sorely tried men fought the Battle of Stalingrad. The German 6th Army was a formidable opponent and Soviet casualties were high, especially among inexperienced units, which had to learn quickly if they were to survive. Nevertheless, Chuikov's instructions gave 62nd Army a fighting chance, and it wasn't long before German soldiers began to fear their Russian counterparts, who

AIR HERO A major of the Soviet Air Force, which was part of the Red Army. The red and gold chevrons on the forearm show his rank.



GERMAN TANK The StuG III assault gun was a conversion of a PzKpfw III tank armed with a 75mm (2.95in) gun. The vehicle's lack of a turret gave it a low silhouette.

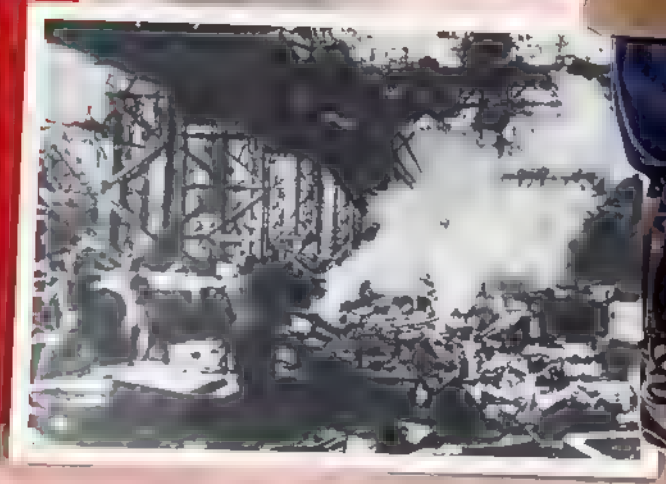
The aftermath of Stalingrad

While the German forces surrendered on 2 February 1943, Russian records indicate that around 11,000 German soldiers continued to fight in isolated groups across the city for another month, many holed up in sewers and cellars. For these men, it was a simple choice: fight on or face a slow death in Soviet captivity. However, by early March, exhausted and outnumbered, the last remnants had laid down their arms.

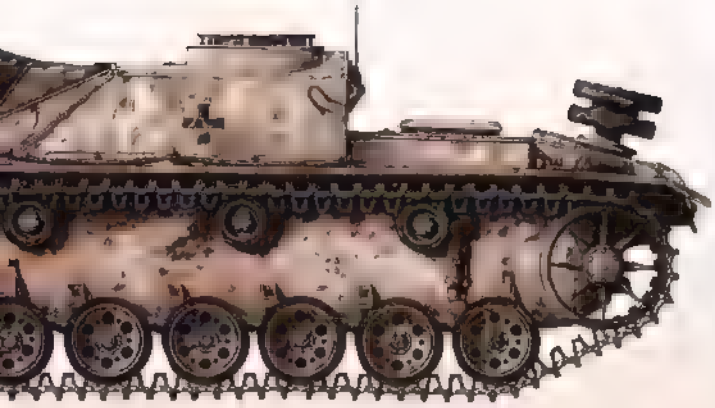
For Germany, the defeat at Stalingrad was a disaster, both in terms of its military significance (it was, effectively, the turning point on the Eastern Front) and the casualties suffered (around 850,000 Axis soldiers are believed to have been killed, injured or captured during the battle). Accordingly, it was the first time the Nazi government publicly acknowledged a failure in its war effort – on 31 January, German state radio even replaced its usual programming with a recording of the second Adagio movement from Anton Bruckner's *Seventh Symphony*, followed by news of the defeat at Stalingrad. And just two weeks after the surrender, on 18 February, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels told a large audience gathered at the Berlin Sportpalast that the German people should prepare for a "total war" – one that would require all of their resources and efforts.

Meanwhile, a handful of German officers were taken to Moscow for propaganda purposes, and some – including Paulus – signed anti-Hitler statements that were later broadcast to German soldiers. While Paulus assured families in Germany that the soldiers taken prisoner at Stalingrad were safe, it was not until 1955 that the survivors were repatriated to West Germany.

LUFTWAFFE LOSSES
THE GERMAN LUFTWAFFE LOST 495 PLANES DURING THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD – AROUND 50 PER CENT OF THE AIRCRAFT THEY USED IN THE CAMPAIGN.



Fighting in the Red October steelworks in October 1942. The plant and its surrounds were reduced to tangled wreckage by the weeks of constant fighting



A German MG34 machine-gun team in Stalingrad. Visible in the background of the grain elevator, where 58 Soviet soldiers held off attacks from three German divisions

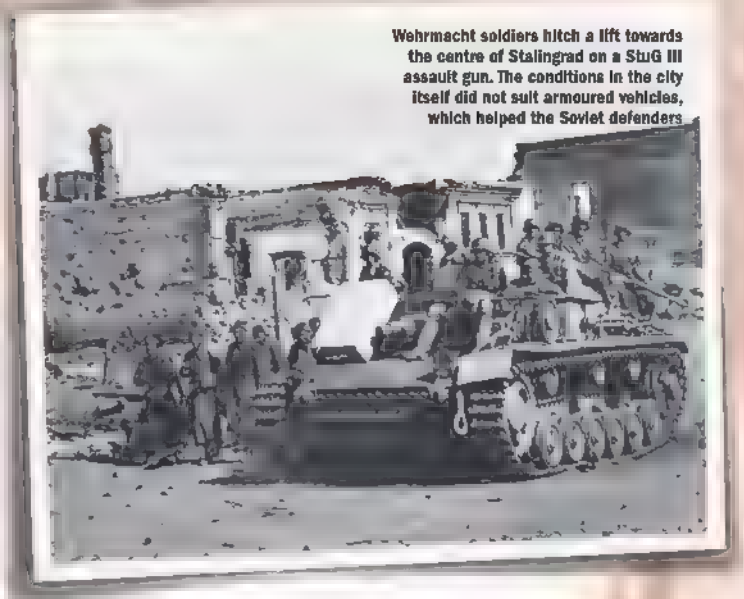
were more at home in this shattered environment. As the battle wore on, Soviet infantrymen were trained for and understood the messy, exhausting nature of street fighting in a way the German troops did not.

Nevertheless, 62nd Army's dawn counter-attack on the Mamayev Kurgan was met by its old foe, the Luftwaffe Gorishny's 95th Division was subjected to a harrowing two-hour ordeal on the summit while, to their left, 284th Siberian and 13th Guards Divisions made little impression on the German lines. At 10.30am, Paulus unleashed his retaliation on 62nd Army. A total of 11 German divisions (14th, 16th and 24th Panzer; 29th and 60th Motorised Infantry; 71st, 79th, 94th, 295th and 389th Infantry; and 100th Jäger) moved forward. As the Luftwaffe dominated the airspace above Stalingrad, 16th Panzer Division and 389th Infantry Division moved on the Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory. 24th Panzer Division attacked the Barrikady, while, on its right side, 100th Jäger advanced on the Red October plant. For 62nd Army, Gorishny's 95th Division found itself battling once again with its old German foe, 295th Infantry Division, for possession of the Mamayev Kurgan. The German 76th Infantry Division held Stalingrad-1 railway station while, from the south, 71st Infantry Division tried to move north along the bank of the Volga and get in behind the Soviet 13th Guards and 284th Siberian.

PAULUS PULLS OUT

ON 30 JANUARY 1943, PAULUS WAS PROMOTED TO FIELD MARSHAL, WITH HITLER TELLING HIM THAT NO FIELD MARSHAL HAD EVER SURRENDERED. THREE DAYS LATER, PAULUS BUCKED THAT TREND.

Soviet infantrymen were trained for and understood [redacted] in a way the German troops did not



Wehrmacht soldiers hitch a lift towards the centre of Stalingrad on a StuG III assault gun. The conditions in the city itself did not suit armoured vehicles, which helped the Soviet defenders

By the evening of 27 September, the Soviet position had deteriorated considerably. On all fronts, the German formations had made considerable progress. Soviet troops had been driven back towards the Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory, where Solugub's 112th Division was clinging on. 24th Panzer Division had made short work of 189th Tank Brigade and was moving on the Barrikady site, while, to its right, 100th Jäger had enjoyed a successful day against 23rd Tank Corps. On the Mamayev Kurgan, the Soviet 95th Division appeared to be on the edge of defeat. The only consolation for Chuikov was that, on his left flank, 13th Guards and 284th Siberian Divisions stood firm – though both were in danger of being left high and dry.

At the end of a day that had begun with a cheeky Soviet counter-attack, the Germans had advanced nearly 3,000 yards and virtually destroyed 95th and 112th Divisions. Chukov, a notorious optimist, noted in his diary, "One more day like this and we will be in the Volga." But for all Chuikov's insight into the nature of the battle at Stalingrad and his astute tactical modifications, 62nd Army was in danger of submitting before it had fully got to grips with the changes its commander was trying to introduce. On the evening of 27 September, Chukov made it clear to both his front commander, Yeremenko, and Nikita Khrushchev, the South-Eastern Front's political commissar, that he needed reserves and respite from the Luftwaffe

Mighty effort

As the cover of night descended, Rogachev's men worked tirelessly to get Colonel F. N. Smekhotvorov's 193rd Division over the Volga. Their success permitted Chuikov to deploy 193rd Division among the outbuildings of the Red October workers' apartments and at the southern end of the Barrikady to meet 24th Panzer Division. At dawn, 284th Siberian Division counter attacked 295th Infantry Division on the Mamayev Kurgan, but failed to make much impression, while, in the centre, Chukov's divisions waited for the main German blow. When it came, 62nd Army handled itself with considerably more aplomb than it had just 24 hours earlier. In his memoirs, Chukov commented that, throughout 28 September, the German assault lacked the conviction, speed and agility of previous days. He was correct: the mighty effort of 27 September – although it had brought 6th Army considerable rewards – had resulted in severe casualties among senior non-commissioned officers ▶

(NCOs) and junior officers. Indeed, to sustain the momentum of 27 September, Paulus abandoned the frustrations of 28 September by switching the main German attack to the north-west corner of Stalingrad, where the Orlovka salient provided a tempting target.

The Orlovka salient intruded several kilometres into the German lines, but was virtually surrounded. On 29 September, General Hans Hube's 16th Panzer Division swept south to meet 60th Motorised Division coming east. On 30 September, the pincers met and, with 389th Infantry Division coming north, the salient was easily snuffed out and the Soviet position in the northern areas of Stalingrad reduced to a narrow sliver of land in the Rynok suburb. The Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory was now directly threatened on all sides, but Chuikov refused to take troops from the centre of Stalingrad to chase a lost cause in the salient. It was clear that the main focus of German operations remained Stalingrad's industrial heart.

A WAR OF NATIONS

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD WASN'T JUST CONTESTED BY GERMAN AND SOVIET TROOPS – SOLDIERS FROM ITALY, HUNGARY, CROATIA AND ROMANIA ALSO FOUGHT, ON THE GERMAN SIDE.

On 29 September, 24th Panzer Division renewed its assault, and by the evening, Solugub's hard-pressed 112th Division had retreated into the Silikat factory to the west of the Barrikady complex. To the immediate south, the German attack on the junction of the southern end of the Barrikady and northern end of the Red October site had succeeded in driving a wedge between 112th Division's left flank and the right flank of Smekhotvorov's 193rd Division. This was a critical development for both sides; the Volga was two-thirds of a mile away and, if the Germans reached it, the heart of 62nd Army would be ripped in two, enabling the Germans to bring the Red October plant's landing stage under fire. Chuikov's command post, behind the Barrikady Ordnance Factory, was in danger from the west and north.

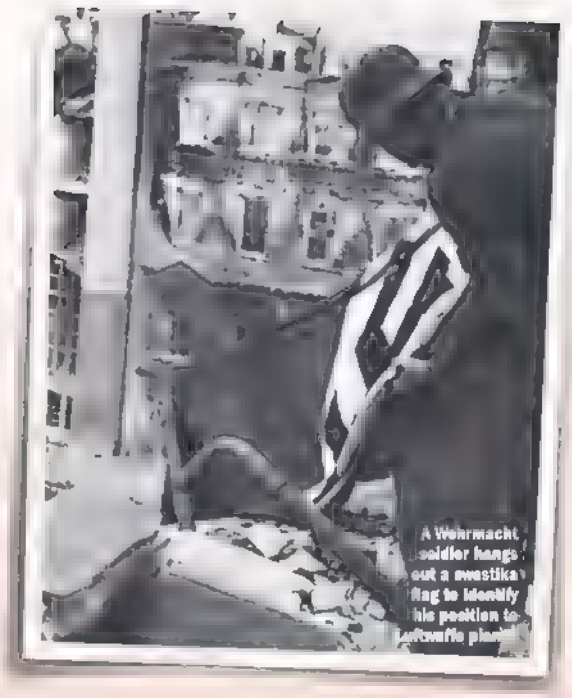
The Soviet position became more tenuous as the German 71st Division made a concerted effort to move north up the bank of the Volga, seeking to encircle 112th and 193rd Divisions. The latter, well aware that it was fighting for its life, threw everything at 24th Panzer Division, while a combination of 284th Siberian and 13th Guards Divisions moved to block 71st Infantry Division. In bitter fighting that cost it three regimental commanders and three battalion commanders in a matter of hours, the menacing advance of 24th Panzer Division was finally halted by Smekhotvorov's 193rd Division, while 71st Infantry Division's progress north was temporarily checked.

Depleted divisions

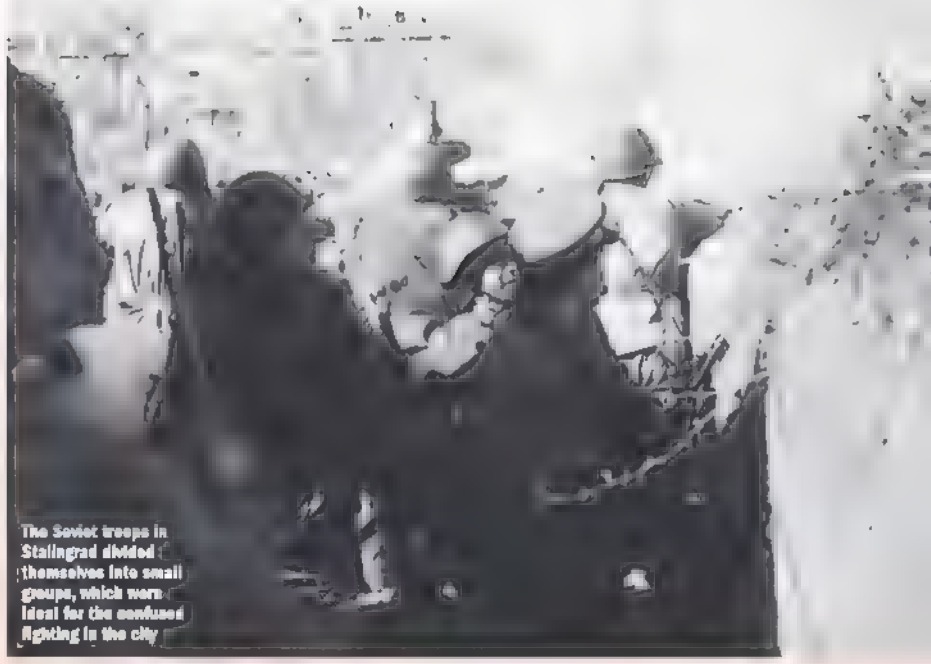
These successes, though dearly bought, at least gained the Soviets time to recover their wits and replenish their depleted divisions before the final German assault on the Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory and the Barrikady Ordnance Factory. The night of 29/30 September saw Rogachev's naval flotilla breathe new life into 62nd Army. Solugub's smashed 112th Division was moved out of the line and into tactical reserve, and was replaced by a combination of 39th Guards Division and 308th Division. Major-General S. S. Gurtiev's 39th Guards Division, raised from 5th Parachute Corps, contained some of the toughest and most highly committed troops in the Red Army. It deployed to the west of the Red October steelworks to support Smekhotvorov's 193rd Division. To the right of 193rd Division, Major-General L. N. Gurtiev's 308th Division took over the positions of Solugub's 112th Division. Its left wing was dug in between the northern area of the Red October steelworks and the Barrikady Ordnance Factory, while its right wing buried itself into the south-west corner of the Barrikady.

The Germans continued to probe 62nd Army's perimeter for the next few days while they readied their main assault. The Soviet line held. Indeed, the German regrouping enabled the South-Eastern Front to get more reserves across the Volga to 62nd Army. On the night of 2 October, Major-General V. G. Zholudev's crack 37th Naval Guards Division, specifically trained in the black art of street fighting, appeared on 62nd Army's order of battle. The Red Army had been sorely pressed in recent days, but the fact that halfway through the second German assault 62nd Army was actually stronger than at the beginning of 6th Army's attack on 27 September reveals a great deal about the Battle of Stalingrad. The ability of the South-Eastern Front to move around 15,000

Any Soviet factory workers that remained in Stalingrad became members of the militia. Here, equipped with rifles, they fire at German aircraft flying overhead



A Wehrmacht soldier hangs out a swastika flag to identify his position to Luftwaffe planes



The Soviet troops in Stalingrad divided themselves into small groups, which were ideal for the confused fighting in the city

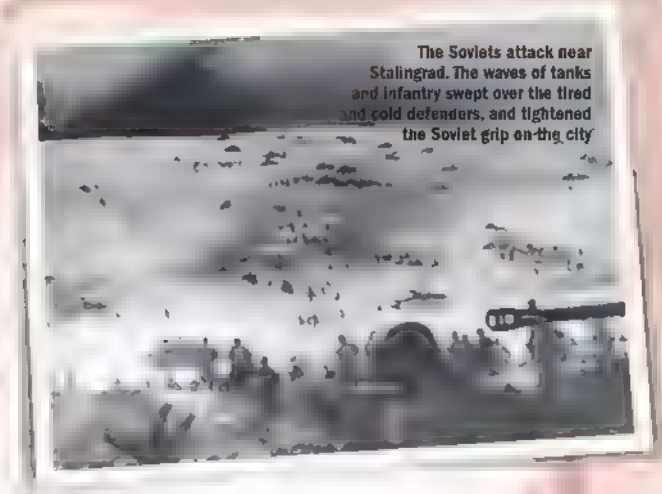
reserves across the Volga illustrates the Luftwaffe's inability to achieve the isolation of 62nd Army from the operational and strategic resources that sustained it. As the strength of Paulus' men diminished, that of Chuikov's men grew. This was the secret of the Red Army's triumph at Stalingrad

Nevertheless, on 3 and 4 October, 62nd Army was again forced to give ground as the new units struggled to find their bearings and coordinate their defence. By 4 October, Chuikov believed that three German infantry and two panzer divisions were concentrated on a frontage of barely three miles, covering the area from the Red October site to the northern corner of the Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory. 14th Panzer Division had been brought into the line west of the Barrikady, while 94th Infantry Division had deployed in the area between the Barrikady and the Red October. On 5 October, the Germans made their supreme effort, and fierce fighting developed along the entire frontage of 62nd Army's position. However, despite massive support from the Luftwaffe, it's significant that only the relatively fresh and rested 14th Panzer Division made any real impact by driving back 37th Naval Guards Division and capturing the Silikat factory on the western edge of the Barrikady site. 94th Infantry Division's experience in attacking the southern end of the Barrikady tells its own story. As Hoffman noted, "Our battalion has gone into the attack four times and got stopped each time." As evening drew on and the Germans massed for a decisive assault on the Barrikady, Red Army artillery on the eastern bank, directed by artillery observers in the city, intervened decisively. The German units were subjected to a crushing 40-minute bombardment that entirely disrupted their plan of attack. As Chuikov recalled in his memoirs, not only was this attack prevented, but also, "6 October passed without any particular enemy infantry and tank activity."

The German units were subjected to a crushing 40-minute bombardment that entirely disrupted their plan of attack

BLADE OF GLORY

IN NOVEMBER 1943, A CEREMONIAL LONGSWORD, THE "SWORD OF STALINGRAD", WAS HANDED TO JOSEPH STALIN BY KING GEORGE VI OF ENGLAND IN HOMAGE TO THE SOVIET DEFENDERS OF THE CITY.



The Soviets attack near Stalingrad. The waves of tanks and infantry swept over the tired and cold defenders, and tightened the Soviet grip on the city

Sickening encounter

As exhausted and shattered German units licked their wounds following the failure of this massive effort, General Paulus ordered a pause in the fighting. Chuikov's 62nd Army had survived another telling blow. It was beginning to dawn on the soldiers and commanders of the German 6th Army that the relatively easy victories of the past were gone forever. As a temporary lull settled over Stalingrad, both sides sensed that the climax of the battle – both physical and psychological – was rapidly approaching. To the Wehrmacht, defeat was unthinkable and victory essential, for Hitler's gaze rested upon Stalingrad with startling intensity. It was almost as though the rest of the Eastern Front did not matter; victory or defeat in the East was to be measured by the Wehrmacht's ability to go the final mile at Stalingrad. Stalin, the Red Army and the Soviet people shared this escalating obsession with this regional city on the Volga. The world's attention was fixed on Stalingrad; this was the crucible of World War II, a battle that would not be forgotten, but one whose legacy would endure for years, even decades to come On 14 October 1942, Hitler issued Operations Order Number 1, which stopped all German military operations on the Eastern Front, except those to take Stalingrad. As the order was dispatched, Paulus' 6th Army launched its third massive assault.

At 8am, Paulus launched three infantry divisions (94th, 389th and 100th Jäger), supported by two panzer divisions (14th and 24th) that had four battalions of specialist combat engineers attached to them. In total, 90,000 men and 300 tanks, with massive air support, drove on 62nd Army The German aim was to smash through to the Volga between the Barrikady and the Red October. The assault was to be led by 14th Panzer Division against 37th Naval Guards Division. On the latter's right was the badly mauled 112th Division, with its right flank on the River Orlovka as it flowed past the Tractor Factory to the Volga. To the left was Gurtiev's 308th Division, deployed in the grounds of the Sculpture Park immediately west of the Barrikady. Gorishny's 95th Division was deployed to the immediate rear of these two frontline units to act as a tactical reserve. On 308th Division's left was the battle-scarred 193rd Division, supported by 284th Siberian Division. The extreme left of 62nd Army's position was held by the veterans of 13th Guards Division

The German assault was of a scale and ferocity not previously witnessed in this most sickening of military encounters. Chuikov's HQ lost count of the number of Luftwaffe attacks once

A Soviet Colonel awards decorations to his men in a Stalingrad trench. Both sides fought courageously in awful conditions

The determined face of a decorated German officer

the total passed 3,000. German armour and infantry followed the Luftwaffe's attacks with a menacing intensity, as they concentrated their assault upon Zholudev's 37th Naval Guards Division and its junction with Gurtiev's 308th Division. By 11.30am, 14th Panzer Division had punched a clean hole through 37th Naval Guards Division, and Chuikov admitted that more than 180 enemy tanks had broken through and were heading in the general direction of the Tractor and Barrikady factories. As 14th Panzer Division broke through, it immediately swung north and enveloped Solugub's 112th Division. The centre-right of 62nd Army's position was deteriorating by the minute. Solugub and Zholudev's divisions had been decimated in a matter of hours. At the same time, 308th Division's right flank was exposed to attack while it was being engaged to the west by 389th Infantry Division, and as 100th Jäger sniped at its left flank. If and when 14th Panzer Division moved south along the Volga, defeat and complete collapse seemed inevitable.

By midnight, Paulus' 6th Army had surrounded the Tractor Factory and had assault groups on the Volga, thus splitting Chuikov's 62nd Army for the third time. The intelligence Chuikov had received from his reconnaissance units led him to believe that the Germans' ultimate objective was the junction of the Barrikady and the Red October sites. He refused to send reserves after a lost cause in the Tractor Factory, and gambled on the ability of surviving Soviet troops to halt the southward progress of the German attack towards the Barrikady and the right wing of 308th Division. On 15 October, Paulus threw another fresh German unit, 305th Infantry Division, into the fray, and the northern flank of the Soviet bridgehead shrunk further as German troops moved south from the Tractor Factory, threatening the rear of 37th Naval Guards Division and 95th Division. Chuikov's command post behind the Barrikady came under threat as 62nd Army was forced back into the area surrounding the Barrikady and the Red October. On the night of 15/16 October, Chuikov finally received some reinforcements when a single regiment of Colonel I. I. Lyudnikov's 138th Siberian Division made it across the Volga

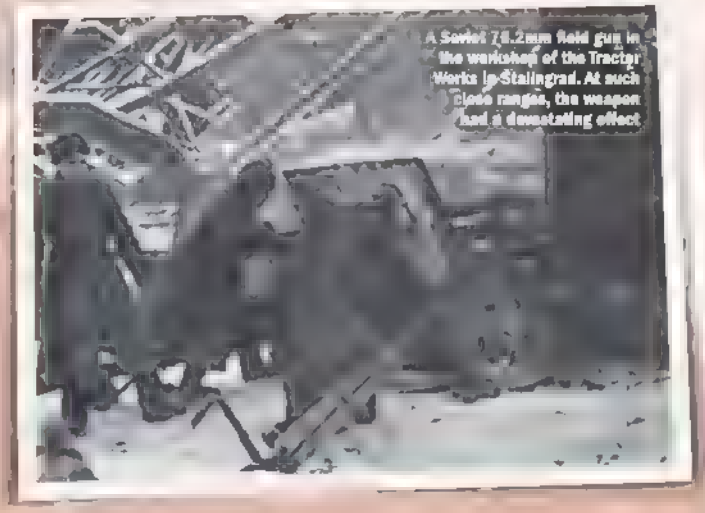
Wreaked havoc

There was little respite as 6th Army sought to drive home its advantage in the early hours of 16 October. 14th Panzer, 100th Jäger and 305th Infantry Divisions were to converge on the Barrikady and finish off 37th Naval Guards and 95th and 308th Divisions. To the south and south-west, 24th Panzer Division and 94th Infantry Division were to focus on the area between the Barrikady and the Red October. The main burden of 14th Panzer Division's drive south down the Volga fell on 84th Tank Brigade. However, as German tanks pressed home their attack, the dug-in and brilliantly camouflaged Red Army T-34s wreaked havoc at point blank range. Less than a mile away to the south-west, Smekhotvorov's 193rd Division and Gurtiev's 39th Guards Division managed to hold off the combined attacks of 24th Panzer and 94th Infantry Divisions. To the west of the Barrikady, in the Sculpture Park, 308th Division was struggling to retain its position, but held the line

Hoffman commented in his diary that "fighting has been going on continuously for four days with unprecedented ferocity"

PRISONERS OF WAR
AT THE END OF THE BATTLE, UP TO 100,000 GERMAN TROOPS WERE TAKEN PRISONER. OF THOSE, ONLY 6,000 SURVIVED TO RETURN TO GERMANY FOLLOWING THE WAR.

The Soviet position was bolstered on the night of 16 October with the arrival of the remaining regiments of Lyudnikov's 138th Siberian Division. They deployed on the right wing of Gurtiev's 308th Division and the northern walls of the Barrikady. Chuikov ordered Lyudnikov to hold the junction with 308th Division. Still the power of the German attack continued as 14th Panzer Division bore down again on 84th Tank Brigade, this time with more success. In conjunction with an attack by the Luftwaffe, German tanks, supported by infantry, swept through 84th Tank Brigade's position. Chuikov commented that, "Buildings were burning, the earth was burning and



A Soviet 76.2mm field gun in the workshop of the Tractor Works in Stalingrad. At such close ranges, the weapon had a devastating effect

SOVIET TANK The T-34/76 was, by early 1943, the mainstay of the Soviet armoured forces and, when first encountered by the Germans in 1941, easily the best tank in the world, belying the myth of Soviet technical inferiority. It remained a formidable tank and was central to the success of Operation Uranus. The tank was very reliable in adverse weather conditions, well-armed with the 76mm cannon, and had wide tracks that did not get easily bogged down on the muddy Russian roads.

the tanks were burning." As 14th Panzer Division moved on to the north-west corner of the Barrikady, Gurtiev's 308th Division, assaulted on three sides, was fighting for its life – and gradually losing. By the afternoon, the fighting was literally at the factory gates, before moving into the workshops and continuing amid the wrecked machinery and twisted metal.

One final, frenzied lunge

During the night of 17/18 October, the proximity of the fighting in the Barrikady persuaded Chuikov that it was time to shift his command post. He moved south along the Volga but failed to find anywhere suitable, so he set up his HQ in the open air on the riverbank behind the Red October plant. As Soviet engineers dug out and camouflaged a command post, the risk of a strike by the Luftwaffe was substantial, but once again the gods of war smiled on Chuikov. By dawn on 18 October, he had a new and fully functioning HQ less than half a mile from the front. Despite its inauspicious origins, he would remain here until the final days of the battle in February 1943.

On 18 October, the German assault concentrated on the Barrikady. One regiment reached the Volga, isolating the Tractor Factory from the Barrikady, while, to the west of the latter, Gurtiev's 308th Division and Lyudnikov's 138th Division scrapped for every inch of ground along the railway lines running directly under the western walls of the factory.

On Gurtiev's left, Smekhotvorov's remarkable yet relatively unsung 193rd Division continued to defy 94th Infantry Division in close, unforgiving encounters. Hoffman commented in his diary that, "fighting has been going on continuously for four days with unprecedented ferocity. During this time, our regiment has advanced barely half a mile. The Russian firing is causing us heavy losses. Men and officers alike have become bitter and silent." However, the relentless nature of the German assault told and, at around noon on 18 October, Smekhotvorov's 193rd Division began to crack, leaving Gurtiev's 308th Division with no protection on its southern flank while heavily engaged on its western and northern wings. In the face of this threat to the heart of 62nd Army's position, Chuikov took the bold step of ordering 308th Division to break contact and conduct a withdrawal of 300 yards. To Chuikov, this was preferable to the encirclement and annihilation of 308th Division – but it was only his reputation and his relative isolation in the city that permitted him to issue such an order.

308th Division was saved to fight another day but by 20 October, 6th Army had secured the Dzerzhinsky Tractor Factory and virtually enveloped all but the extreme eastern side of the Barrikady Ordnance Factory, while continuing to fight within its walls. Chuikov's reconnaissance network had also begun to detect signs of a major German concentration to the west of the Red October steelworks. The first major German drive on the site began on 22 October, as 100th Jäger and 94th and 305th Infantry Divisions attacked Soviet units around the Barrikady, to prepare the way for the fresh 79th Infantry Division to attack the Red October site.

At dawn on 23 October, supported by armour and repeated Luftwaffe air strikes, 39th Guards Rifle Division was attacked by 79th Infantry Division. Concentrated on the north-western corner of the Red October site, the assault succeeded (in conjunction with other German moves on the Barrikady) in isolating Gurtiev's tough paratroopers in the steelworks. German infantry moved into the Red October's foundries and workshops, and the next day German troops successfully captured the central and south-western sections of the Barrikady, further isolating Gurtiev's forces. As Smekhotvorov's 193rd Division's strength gave way, another ominous wedge was being driven into the Soviet defences between the Barrikady complex and the Red October site. However, the German assault and the bitterness of the fighting had taken their toll. On 25 and 26 October, the tempo and ferocity of the German attacks diminished as Paulus' 6th Army, despite its tactical successes, took stock and rebuilt shattered companies, battalions and regiments for one last effort.

As Chuikov's exhausted 62nd Army gained temporary respite, it received further reinforcements in the shape of two regiments of Colonel V. P. Sokolov's 45th Division under the command of Smekhotvorov's hard-pressed 193rd Division. On 28 October, the reshuffled German units made one final, frenzied lunge at 62nd Army. In the centre of the front, German troops finally drove Gurtiev's 308th Division and Lyudnikov's 138th Siberian Division out of the Barrikady, but could not battle their way to the Volga just 500 yards away. To the south of the Barrikady, inside the Red October steelworks, the German 79th Infantry Division renewed its attack on 39th Guards Rifle Division. In a matter of hours, the German troops had broken into the factory in strength, with the leading sections a mere 400 yards from the Volga. Hand-to-hand fighting with flame-throwers, shovels and axes raged through the factory, with Gurtiev's command post the scene of prolonged battles.

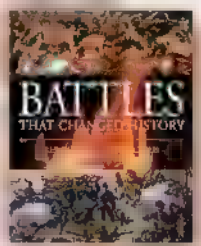
On Chuikov's orders, Soviet reinforcements scurried through Stalingrad's streets to the Red October. By the evening of 29 October, the fighting in the steel complex finally died down and, on 30 October, an odd calm descended upon the Red October works. It would be the scene of spasmodic, vicious little encounters until the final German surrender on 2 February 1943.

A soldier from 62nd Army waves a red flag in Fallen Fighters Square to celebrate the Soviet victory. In the background is the Universmag department store, where Paulus located his HQ.

NEW NAME

IN 1961, NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV'S ADMINISTRATION CHANGED THE NAME OF STALINGRAD TO VOLGOGRAD ("VOLGA CITY").

This feature was edited using material from two books: *Stalingrad: The Infernal Cauldron* and *Battles That Changed History*. Both are published by Amber Books and available from www.amberbooks.co.uk



Leaders of Men

AMERICAN GENERALS

From Washington to Ridgway, Steve Jarratt reveals our selection of the finest US Generals, whose efforts both on and off the battlefield have helped shaped history

Over the course of its 238-odd years, the United States has produced many brilliant military leaders, and for this issue we've concentrated on that elite band that made it to the rank of General Of The Armies. Narrowing it down to just ten was almost impossible; for example, we've excluded General William Tecumseh Sherman – a brilliant strategist but also an advocate of "hard war", which employed a scorched-earth policy to destroy both the Confederacy's morale and its means to wage war.

Neither does General John J. Pershing make the cut, despite being made General of the Armies, the highest possible rank in the US Army. Ignoring the experience of the British and French in WWI, he decided to forego trench tactics in favour of frontal assaults, and is seen as responsible for the heavy casualties suffered by the American troops.

We've also, probably unfairly, avoided modern-day Generals like "Stormin' Norman" Schwarzkopf, who took on a larger, battle-hardened force in Iraq and destroyed it in three days. Of course, he just happened to be in charge of the wealthiest and most technologically advanced military in history; short-term victory was always assured.

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON

FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

1732-1799

The future founding father of America was the son of Augustine Washington, an entrepreneur in Westmoreland County, Virginia. In 1752, Washington Jnr joined the Virginia Militia and fought during the Seven Years War of 1756-1763, rising to the rank of honorary Brigadier General. In 1755, he was the senior US aide to British General Edward Braddock, and was part of the ambushed expedition into the Ohio Valley. Braddock was mortally wounded and Washington narrowly escaped injury while shepherding the troops in retreat. He was refused a commission in the British Army and resigned in 1758.

When the political disputes between Britain and her North American colonies escalated into war, Washington was in a prime position to be appointed Major General and Commander in-Chief of the Continental Army. Despite his lack of training, he was a determined and resourceful man; he outmanoeuvred the British forces and, with help from the French, ensured their eventual surrender during the Siege of Yorktown in 1781.

DID YOU KNOW?

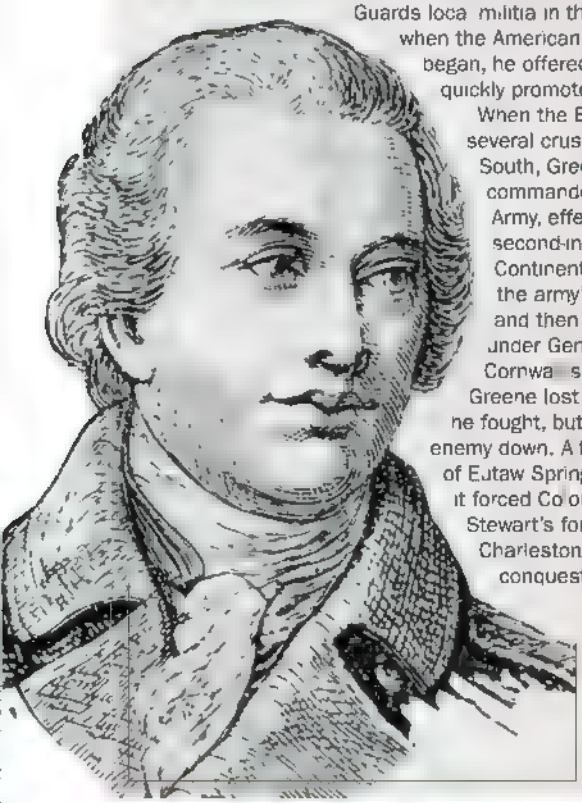
Washington taught himself to be a surveyor and, aged 17, became surveyor for Culpeper County, Virginia. Were it not for the war, he may well have enjoyed a profitable career.

GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE

THE FIGHTING QUAKER

1742-1786

One of George Washington's most trusted officers in the Revolutionary Army was a pacifist Quaker by birth, but one who was fascinated by military science. He joined the Kentish Guards local militia in the early 1770s, and when the American War of Independence began, he offered his services, being quickly promoted to Major General. When the British inflicted several crushing defeats in the South, Greene was appointed commander of the Southern Army, effectively becoming second-in-command of the Continental Army. He oversaw the army's strategic retreat, and then lured the British, under General Charles Cornwallis, into various actions. Greene lost every pitched battle he fought, but gradually wore the enemy down. Although the final Battle of Eutaw Springs proved inconclusive, it forced Colonel Alexander Stewart's forces to withdraw to Charleston, surrendering their conquests in the South.



DID YOU KNOW?

After the war, Greene retired to a plantation near Savannah, given to him by the grateful people of Georgia. He died of sunstroke in 1786.

GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT

PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER

1786-1866

Scott was born on a plantation near Petersburg, Virginia, and trained to be a lawyer. But after graduating, he soon tired of his chosen profession, joining the Virginia Militia cavalry and, in 1808, gaining his commission as a Captain in the US Army. He was assigned to the Light Artillery and posted to New Orleans, serving under the corrupt Brigadier General James Wilkinson.

In 1810, Scott was court martialled for criticising his commander, and suspended for a year. When war was declared between the US and Britain in 1812, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and was part of the force that invaded Canada. A stickler for presentation, "Old Fuss and Feathers" rose through the ranks, becoming General-in-Chief of the US Army in 1841. During the Mexican-American War of 1846, he led the Army's first major amphibious landing at Collado Beach, and marched around 12,000 men on Veracruz. He then secured six major victories against Mexican forces and captured the enemy capital. Upon hearing of this, the Duke of Wellington referred to him as "the greatest living General." Scott's last great act was to devise the Anaconda Plan, which called for the blockading of the South during the American Civil War to squeeze the life out of the Confederacy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Scott was responsible for setting the standards of the US Army, and was a commanding General from 1841 to 1861 – longer than anyone else in US history.

GENERAL ROBERT EDWARD LEE

HERO OF THE SOUTH

1807-1870

Robert E. Lee graduated second in his class from West Point academy, and served with distinction as Captain under General Winfield Scott during the conflict with Mexico in 1846-1848. At the outbreak of the American Civil War, Lee was serving with the 2nd US Cavalry and initially ridiculed the Confederacy. But when offered a command in the Union, he rejected it and later resigned when his home state of Virginia seceded, taking command of the Army of North Virginia in 1862. His strategic nous helped him to outwit larger armies, and he was responsible for planning "Stonewall" Jackson's successful Shenandoah Campaign.

Lee enjoyed his greatest success at the Battle of Chancellorsville, but he then mistakenly invaded the North, hoping to show off the power of the Confederate Army while securing much-needed supplies in Pennsylvania. Lee's forces engaged the Union under George G. Meade at Gettysburg, where, on the third day, Lee's order for a frontal assault at Cemetery Ridge proved disastrous. The Confederate Army never recovered from the huge casualties it sustained on that day.

DID YOU KNOW?

Spared from being hanged as a traitor, Lee returned home in 1865, accepted a job at a college in western Virginia, and never spoke of politics again.

GENERAL ULYSSES SIMPSON GRANT

DEFEATER OF THE CONFEDERACY

1822-1885

Upon enlisting at West Point, Hiram Ulysses Grant found himself listed by his middle name and his mother's maiden name (Simpson), and so became Ulysses S. Grant. After graduation, he served in the Mexican-American War, earning awards for gallantry. A miserable posting in Oregon prompted him to retire and try his hand at life on the family farm but, six years later, the Civil War erupted and he was appointed Colonel of the 21st Illinois Infantry. He was quickly promoted to Brigadier and enjoyed success at Fort Henry and later at Fort Donelson, where he earned his nickname of "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.

The great man was often accused of drunkenness, but that didn't seem to impair his abilities on the battlefield, and he secured a victory at Vicksburg that proved the turning point of the war in the West. He then took control of the Army of the Potomac and relentlessly pursued Robert E. Lee and his army, suffering heavy casualties in order to erode the Confederate forces and ultimately crush the rebellion.

DID YOU KNOW?

Grant fared poorly at West Point, receiving several demerits for tardiness and slovenly dress code.

GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR

AMPHIBIAN TACTICIAN

1880-1964

The son of a recipient of the Medal of Honor, Douglas MacArthur graduated top of his class from West Point in 1903, and later served with the 42nd "Rainbow" Division in the First World War, fighting at the Battle of Saint Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in 1918.

In the interwar period, MacArthur spent many years in the Philippines and rose to become Field Marshal of the Philippine Army. Surprised by the Japanese invasion of the islands in WWII, he was flown to Australia and ordered to halt the advance. His strategy was to attack only main objectives, thus speeding up progress and minimising casualties. His brilliant amphibious campaign liberated the Philippines, and he was preparing plans for the invasion of Japan when it surrendered.

During the Korean War, MacArthur spearheaded the capture of Inchon in a pincer movement that practically destroyed the North Korean Army. But manoeuvres above the 38th Parallel brought the Chinese into the war, forcing a mass retreat of UN forces. MacArthur's desire to extend the war to China was in opposition to the "limited war" being carried out by the US and Europe, and he was relieved of his command by President Truman.

DID YOU KNOW?

MacArthur wanted to escalate the war and, if left to his own devices, would probably have started World War Three against China and Russia.

1830 1840 1850 1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 19

1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855 1860 1865 1870 1875 1880 1885 1890 1895 1900 1905

Mary Evans

GENERAL GEORGE SMITH PATTON JNR

AMERICA'S FIRST TANK COMMANDER

Born in California, Patton came from a long line of military men, dating back to the Revolutionary War. Unsurprisingly, he enrolled in the Virginia Military Institute and subsequently graduated from West Point in 1909. He took part in the punitive expedition against Pancho Villa in 1915, before joining the US Tank Corps as Captain during WWI – the first officer to be appointed to the new unit. Like MacArthur, he fought at Saint Mihiel and in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, earning himself a Distinguished Service Cross and a Distinguished Service Medal.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Patton was promoted to Major General and given command of the newly formed 2nd Armored Division. His first task was to lead the Western Task Force and take Casablanca from Vichy French forces in 1942. Then, following its defeat by Germany's Afrika Corps, he rebuilt II Corps for the offensive in Tunisia and led the invasion of Sicily in 1943.

Patton proved to be a brilliant but divisive leader; brash, profane, arrogant and politically insensitive, but a great inspiration to his men, who nicknamed him "Old Blood and Guts".

DID YOU KNOW?

Patton was an Olympic athlete and competed in the first Modern Pentathlon event in Stockholm in 1912.

GENERAL GEORGE MARSHALL JNR

ORGANISER OF VICTORY

1880-1959

After his poor performance at school, Marshall vowed to excel when joining Virginia Military Institute. Although he struggled academically, he proved to be a brilliant military cadet and graduated in 1901, accepting a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the US Army.

After a year in the Philippines, Marshall spent time at various postings in America, before entering WWI as a Captain in operations for the 1st Infantry Division Working with General John Pershing, he was involved in the planning of the Saint Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives. He spent the inter-war years training in the US Army War College and, prior to WWII, was promoted to General and made Chief of Staff of the US Army

While hostilities raged in Europe, Marshall oversaw the expansion of the Army and the development of American war plans Churchill referred to him as the "organiser of victory" and, for his efforts, he was promoted to General of the Army and given a five-star rank – the first Army officer to receive it. His final act was to outline the "Marshall Plan" for the rebuilding of Europe, for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1924, Marshall was sent on assignment to China, to oversee the troops protecting Americans living there. He and his wife stayed in Tientsin, and he learned to speak Chinese.

GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

D-DAY OVERLORD

1890-1969

Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower graduated from West Point and spent the years during WWI in training schools, where he was top of his class. He was twice denied action in Europe, first by being transferred to the new Tank Corps as a trainer, and then by the armistice, which was signed a week before he was due to ship out. He was on General MacArthur's staff during the 1930s, and in 1941 he gained promotion to Major General, whereupon he was put in charge of US forces in Europe. Eisenhower's first assignment was the invasion of French North Africa and Tunisia, followed by his command of the invasion of Sicily.

With Italy secured, he was ordered to England as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force (a position he was given in favour of George Marsnall), and asked to plan Operation Overlord, the amphibious assault on Normandy. Eisenhower displayed great political and diplomatic skill in managing the differing needs of the Allied commanders, while making key strategic decisions. He later became Supreme Commander of NATO and President of the US, an administration that many suggest was unfairly criticised at the time.

DID YOU KNOW?

Eisenhower's hopes for a constructive peace summit with Russia were thwarted in 1960 by the capture of a U-2 spy plane and its pilot, Gary Powers.

1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990

1910 1915 1920 1925 1930 1935 1940 1945 1950 1955 1960 1965 1970 1975 1980 1985 1990

Getty Images

GENERAL MATTHEW B. RIDGWAY

SAVIOUR OF THE UN FORCE IN KOREA

1895-1993

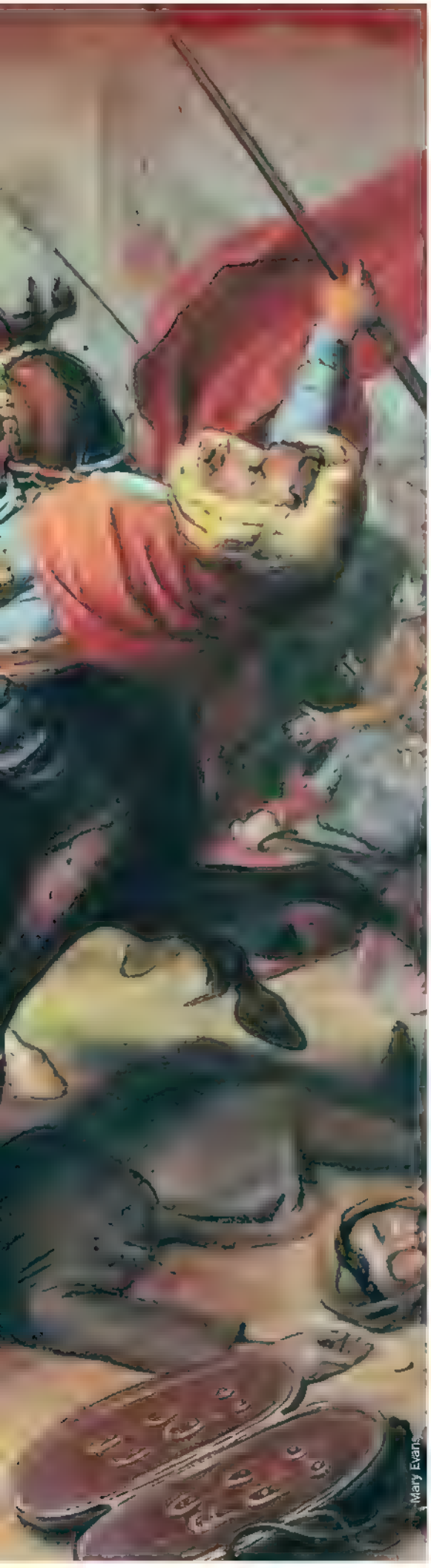
Another West Point graduate, Matthew Bunker Ridgway served with the 3rd Infantry during WWI, but his first overseas action would be with the 82nd Airborne and the assault on Sicily in 1943. He led the amphibious assault on Salerno, and parachuted into France on D-Day, 1944. He played a significant role in checking the German Ardennes Offensive, and became a three-star General during the Rhine and Ruhr campaigns.

However, it was in Korea where Ridgway made his name, taking charge of the battered and retreating US 8th Army, and instilling its men with confidence. Following the sacking of Douglas MacArthur, Ridgway took control of the UN forces in Korea, and his defensive tactics halted the Chinese offensive, enabling him to regain control of the area and recapture Seoul. An impressed Omar Bradley called Ridgway's actions "the greatest feat of personal leadership in the history of the Army". With the Chinese and UN forces at a stalemate, an armistice was signed in July 1953.

DID YOU KNOW?

The son of a Colonel, Matthew Ridgway was brought up on a variety of military bases across the US, and took pride in being an "Army brat".

During the Crusades the Middle East was plagued by war and unrest. This 1840s painting by Jean Joseph Benjy depicts the Siege of Antioch, which occurred around 20 years before the Battle of Sarmada



Great Battles

SARMADA

The Crusades: The 1119 Battle of Sarmada is also known as "Field of Blood", and for good reason. Fewer than 200 of the 3,700 Crusader soldiers escaped with their lives...

ONE OF THE ARMIES OF THE First Crusade established itself in Jerusalem in 1099, and, after beating off attempts to dislodge it, gradually consolidated its hold. Although Pope Urban II, who had instigated the Crusade, died before hearing of its success, the mission was apparently accomplished. The holy city was in Christian hands.

However, the Christian hold on the region was somewhat tenuous. Armies sent to reinforce the occupation of Jerusalem in 1100-01 were defeated before they got anywhere near the city. Worse, the Byzantines, who had assisted the Crusaders, were becoming disenchanted with the whole business. The Crusading Franks were supposed to have returned territory they took to Byzantine rule, but had not done so.

The Franks, meanwhile, were not at all impressed with the degree of support they were receiving, and did not like the way the Byzantines were trying to retake their traditional territories. This all detracted from the real business at hand – the constant battles to keep and expand control of the Holy Land.

Despite a variety of setbacks and a defeat at Harran in 1104, the Franks were able to gradually expand their holdings in the Holy Land and elsewhere in Muslim territory during the years 1100-19. Acre fell to them in 1104 and Tripoli in 1109. Beirut and Sarda were captured in 1110, and Tyre in 1124.

This left the Crusaders in control of a considerable stretch of territory and a lot of critical coastline, through which supplies and reinforcements could be brought in. Attempts by the local Muslim leaders to retake their territory were a regular feature of the period, and conflict was more or less constant, rising and falling in intensity at various times.

CONFLICT WAS MORE OR LESS CONSTANT, RISING AND FALLING IN INTENSITY AT VARIOUS TIMES

At first, the Crusaders had seemed invincible, brushing aside attempts to stop them with headlong charges of armoured horsemen backed up by infantry and lighter cavalry. The latter were mainly Turcopoles ("sons of Turks"), recruited from the region and converted to Christianity. Armed with bows and lances, and wearing only light armour (if any), their superior mobility allowed them to protect the flanks of the heavy cavalry.

This combination of forces had worked well at first, and attempts by Muslim troops to meet the knightly charges head-on resulted in defeat. The Muslim leaders were learning how to defeat the Crusaders, however, and at Harran the invaders suffered their first major reverse.

That battle had been a clash between Crusaders besieging the city of Harran, and Seljuk Turks coming to its relief. After a series of small skirmishes in which the Crusaders were victorious, a major battle developed. ▶

The facts

WHO A Crusader force from the Principality of Antioch under the leadership of Roger of Salerno, numbering around 3,700 men. They were opposed by a larger force of Turks under Ilghazi.

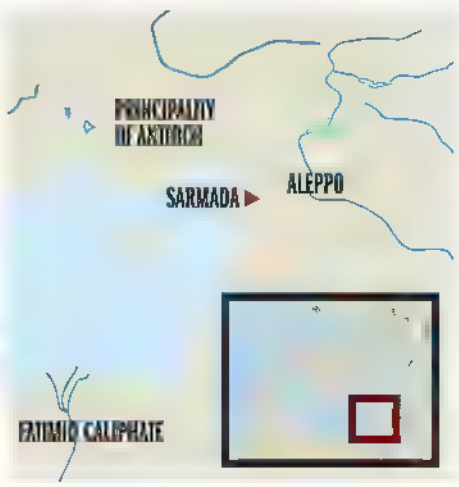
WHAT The Crusader force was surrounded and attacked by a superior enemy.

WHERE Kadesh was a rich and powerful, fortified city in what we now know as Syria. It offered an excellent outpost to defend an empire, or from which to expand.

WHEN 1119

WHY The Crusaders responded to an invasion of their territory by the Turks, resulting in a fierce engagement.

OUTCOME The Crusader force was massacred, with very few survivors.



Although more lightly equipped than the knights opposing them, the cavalry of the Muslim army were determined, experienced and well armed. Equally able to harass an enemy with minor attacks or make a massed lance charge, these horsemen were a powerful military asset in the right hands.

During this action, one wing of the Crusader army rushed impetuously into action and was soundly defeated, although the rest of the force retired and escaped.

Harran served to demonstrate not only that the Crusaders could be beaten, but also how it could be done. The battle had political consequences, too, deepening the rift between the Crusading Franks and the Byzantines. The latter even took advantage of the situation and recaptured some of their territory.

Nevertheless, the Crusaders managed to expand their territory despite the constant conflict. With the death of Radwan of Aleppo in 1113, a period of relative peace descended. At this time, the main Crusader provinces were

IT WAS THE KNIGHTS WHO DECIDED THE ISSUE BY CHARGING AT THE ENEMY AND DEFEATING HIM

Edessa under Baldwin II, Tripoli under Pons, and Antioch. Roger of Salerno was Regent of Antioch on behalf of Bohemond II.

By 1117, Aleppo was under the rule of Ilghazi of the Ortoqid dynasty, and the stage was set for further conflict. Roger of Salerno had perhaps passed up an opportunity to smash Aleppo during the disruption caused by Radwan's death. Now, Aleppo once again had strong leadership and was in a position to respond when Roger's forces took Azaz in 1118.

The capture of Azaz provided the Crusaders with a route to attack Aleppo, and this could not be tolerated. Ilghazi responded in 1119 by invading the Principality of Antioch. Roger of Salerno was advised to ask for help from Pons and from Baldwin, who was now King of Jerusalem, but for reasons of his own he declined. Perhaps he thought he could not afford to wait for assistance to arrive

Vastly outnumbered

Roger assembled his forces at Artah, not far from Antioch. He was advised to remain there by Bernard of Valence, the Latin Patriarch of Antioch. Ilghazi would have to reduce the fortress of Artah in order to advance on Antioch, or risk being attacked in flank or rear by Roger's army. Again, Bernard suggested a defensive strategy, waiting for assistance in the security of the fortress

Roger would have none of it. It's possible that he was overconfident, as the Crusaders had tended to win most engagements by simply attacking headlong as soon as possible. There are some parallels with the British situation in India centuries later. There, too, a vastly outnumbered occupying force generally defeated its enemies via a headlong attack, no matter what the odds. However, the British would have two major advantages in India. First, they would possess superior weapons and be better trained than their opponents. More importantly, they would have the myth of invincibility on their side. Roger had neither. After Harran, the Muslims knew that the Crusaders

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WEAPONS OF DEATH

With warriors wielding sharpened axes, swords and spears, there were numerous grisly ways that you could meet your end during the Crusades. No wonder soldiers from both sides wore such sturdy armour and carried such large shields.

could be beaten, and while Roger's force was differently armed to its opponents, there's serious doubt as to whether it was *better* armed.

Roger of Salerno commanded a force of about 3,700 men, of whom around 700 were mounted knights and men-at-arms, and the remainder a mix of Turcopoles and infantry. The cavalry were the main striking force. Typical of Crusader knights and men-at-arms, they were covered in heavy armour, and armed with lances and swords. Each man was the most powerful military force that an individual could be, but that's exactly what the knightly contingent was – a collection of individual warriors rather than a disciplined fighting force.

The infantry and Turcopoles were there simply as supports for the main striking force, and to protect the knights in camp or on the march. These men were neither well trained nor very highly valued. In battle, it was the knights who decided the issue by charging at the enemy and defeating him. Infantry were considered to be ▶

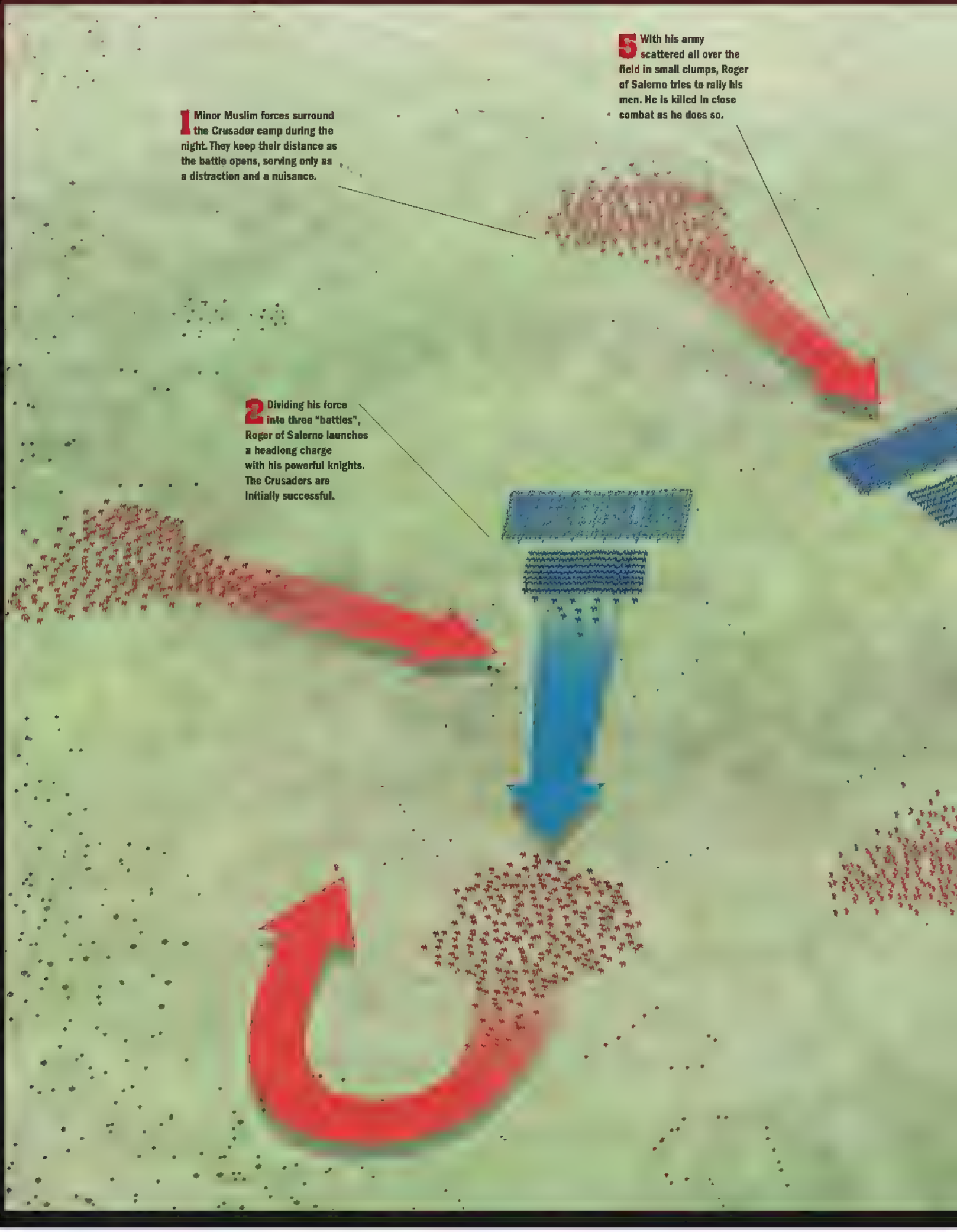
OPPOSING FORCES

CRUSADERS (ESTIMATED)

Knights/men-at-arms:	700
Infantry:	3,000
Total:	3,700

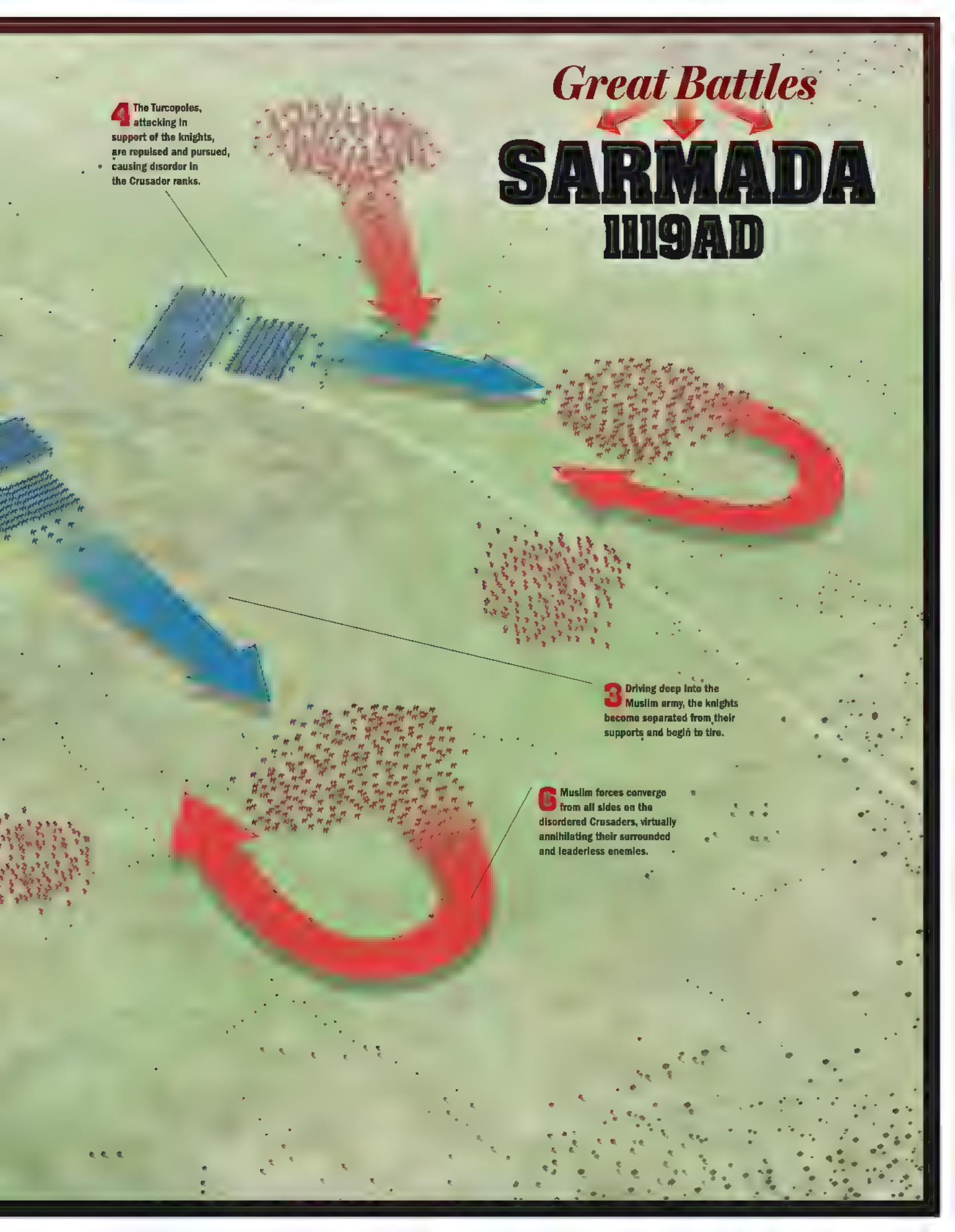
MUSLIMS (ESTIMATED)

Total:	10,000


1 Minor Muslim forces surround the Crusader camp during the night. They keep their distance as the battle opens, serving only as a distraction and a nuisance.
2 Dividing his force into three "battles", Roger of Salerno launches a headlong charge with his powerful knights. The Crusaders are initially successful.
5 With his army scattered all over the field in small clumps, Roger of Salerno tries to rally his men. He is killed in close combat as he does so.

Great Battles

SARMADA
1119AD



4 The Turcopoles, attacking in support of the knights, are repulsed and pursued, causing disorder in the Crusader ranks.

3 Driving deep into the Muslim army, the knights become separated from their supports and begin to tire.

6 Muslim forces converge from all sides on the disordered Crusaders, virtually annihilating their surrounded and leaderless enemies.

ttle more than hangers-on, or at best a mobile obstruction to rally behind before launching the next charge.

The exact numbers of the Muslim force are not known, but it's likely that they outnumbered the Crusaders by a substantial margin. Muslim armies of the period tended to be more lightly equipped than their Crusader opponents, but were more mobile as a consequence. In order to take advantage of that mobility, a certain level of discipline was also required, allowing the various parts of the army to operate as a coordinated force.

Thus, the opposing forces were very different. If the Crusaders could land a blow with the sledgehammer that was their mounted knights, whatever was struck would be destroyed. But the sledgehammer could not be swung many times before exhaustion began to set in and, meanwhile, the Muslim forces would be nibbling away at the Crusader army with arrows and fast, mounted charges by lighter cavalry, waiting for the decisive moment to wade in and finish the matter.

Roger of Salerno began his advance, moving to meet the Muslim army. As he reached the pass of Sarmada, he learned that one of his forts, located at al-Atharib, was under siege, and decided to do something about it.

Roger sent out a small force under Robert of Vieux-Pont to break the siege. Rather than meet the Crusaders head-on, the wily Ilghazi ordered a retreat, and Robert's force pursued, joined by forces from the fortress.

Warriors in tears

However, this was not a real retreat at all, but a feigned withdrawal of the sort favoured by the Muslim armies to draw out and tire their impetuous foes. Among the nobility of Europe, caution was another word for cowardice, and it was widely accepted that a commander who failed to lead his men in a headlong assault would quickly lose their confidence. Thus, Robert really had no choice but to pursue, and indeed, at that stage in the campaign, he simply may not have known about the favourite tactics of his foes.

Thus, Robert's men were drawn ever further from support, supply and the security of the fort, and, when the time was right, Ilghazi turned and launched his own attack. The Muslim fighting man of the period was much better disciplined than his European counterpart, and thought nothing of being ordered to flee for many kilometres before turning to fight. This pragmatic attitude gave Ilghazi an easy victory over Robert's relief force, as a prelude to setting out to meet the main Crusader army.

During the night of 27-28 June, the Muslim army moved into position, surrounding the camp of the smaller Crusader force. Roger of Salerno was probably not unduly worried. He was a Christian knight about to give battle in the Lord's name. Victory was his by right, and surely nothing could withstand the head-on charge of his knights?

Roger split his force into three "battles", as was common practice at the time. These were under the command of Geoffrey the Monk,

BYZANTINE INFANTRYMAN
While Byzantine troops of the 12th Century generally had mail armour, and were armed with a shield and a sword, they were still more lightly equipped than the Crusaders, which gave them more mobility. They were also disciplined, and would not give in at the first sign of adversity.

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An 18th-century illumination depicting the Crusades. By the time this depiction was made, the Crusades had become something of a romantic legend whose complex (and sometimes sordid) details had been largely forgotten.

In this 12th-century French manuscript illustration, Muslim cavalry and Crusader knights engage in hand-to-hand combat. In reality, Muslim cavalry rarely engaged up close with the more heavily armed and armoured European knights unless they had a significant numerical advantage, preferring instead to harass at a distance with missile fire.

Guy Fresnel and Roger himself. Meanwhile, the Muslim army was being addressed by Abu al-Fadl ibn al-Khashshab, who was armed for battle but wearing the turban of a lawyer.

This slightly incongruous combination detracted nothing from his oratory as he reminded the assembled soldiers of their duty and role in the coming clash. By the time he was finished, according to contemporary historians, many of the warriors were in tears and went to battle inspired to great deeds

Hammer blow

Not unexpectedly, things at first went well for Roger of Salerno. The initial charge of his knights met with success and drove the enemy back. However, a Muslim army was not like a European one. European armies could be rather brittle, shattering under the hammer blow of seeing their knights defeated or even just driven back

Fighting power was more evenly distributed in the Muslim armies, and discipline was good enough to absorb any blows to morale A setback in one area would not necessarily dismay the men fighting elsewhere

Besides, even as the Crusaders drove forward, they tired quickly. Weary men mounted on blown horses became increasingly separated from their supports, and the tide began to turn. Robert of Saint-Lô, leading the Turcopole force, was driven back into the main line of the Crusader army. This caused severe disruption, and the Muslims were coordinated enough to take advantage of it.

The Crusader army began to break up, and small groups were quickly overwhelmed by superior numbers. Roger of Salerno tried to rally his men, fighting under a huge jewelled cross that was his personal banner – but it was to no avail. He was struck down by a blow to the face as his army disintegrated

There was nowhere to run. The Crusaders had started the battle surrounded, and were now scattered all over the field in disorganised clumps. The Muslim warriors concentrated

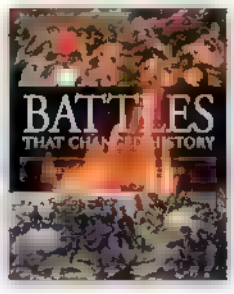
ROGER OF SALERNO WAS STRUCK DOWN BY A BLOW TO HIS FACE AS HIS ARMY DISINTEGRATED

against first one and then another of these, slaughtering the Crusader army until virtually nothing was left of it.

Only two of Roger's knights survived the engagement. One of those, Raynald Mazoir, was able to reach the fort at Sarmada but was later taken prisoner. Other prisoners were taken, while a handful of men were able to make off and reach safety. In the end, some 3,500 of the 3,700 Crusaders who took part were killed, giving the battle its name – Ager Sanguinis, or "Field of Blood". Bernard was left to prepare a hasty defence of Antioch, which probably would've been in vain. However, Ilghazi did not launch an attack. King Baldwin of Jerusalem and Count Pons arrived in time to eject Ilghazi from the region, and Baldwin took control of Antioch

The Principality of Antioch was crippled by the catastrophic defeat of Roger and his army, and never really recovered. Although the Battle of Azaz – which took place a few years later in 1125 – was a victory that allowed the Crusaders to reclaim some of their prestige, the myth of their invincibility, which had served them so well for so long, had been shattered forever.

The Muslims now knew without a shadow of a doubt that they could defeat the Crusader forces in the field, and they would do so repeatedly in the years and decades to come.



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TRIGGER POINT

THE START OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

When the Iranian revolution of 1979 resulted in civil unrest and a weakened military, Saddam Hussein saw an opportunity to cement Iraq as the major power in the Middle East. The resulting war would drag on for eight long years...

THE SOLDIERS WERE HUNCHED down in trenches behind barbed wire, gas masks at the ready, awaiting the order to head out into no man's land. When the signal arrived, wave after wave of men charged towards opposing lines in an attempt to overwhelm the enemy. Thousands would die in this way, mown down by machine-gun fire or killed by landmines.

These men weren't fighting in the quagmire of northern Europe, but the desert plains of the Iran-Iraq border. The First Persian Gulf War began in September 1980 and would run for almost eight years, making it the longest conventional war of the 20th Century. By the end, it had cost more than a trillion dollars in arms and damage, and racked up millions of casualties – but had resulted in no real gains for either side.

There were many aspects to the conflict, arising from its location at the crossroads of East and West, with generations of rivalries over culture, ethnicity, class, politics and religion. But the main source of the war was a dispute over territory, which can be traced back to the early 16th Century, when the Ottoman and Persian empires collided.

The Ottoman state began with the rise of the House of Osman in the 13th Century. Osman I was one of several Turkmen tribal lords, or "Beys", of the Anatolian Peninsula, between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The Beyliks had been set up by the Seljuq empire of Iran in the 11th Century to act as a buffer zone between it and the Byzantine empire, and were populated by Muslim frontier warriors, or "gazi".

SADDAM HUSSEIN LAUNCHED AN INVASION INTO IRAN ON 22 SEPTEMBER 1980

But when Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes invaded Iran, the Seljuqs' power began to fade and the various Anatolian clans saw an opportunity to declare their own sovereignty. Osman did the same in 1299, which is regarded as the beginning of the Ottoman empire. The dynasty continued after Osman's death in 1326, and by 1400 all the remaining Turkish dynasties had been absorbed into the empire.

The Mongol invasion of Iran – known to the West as Persia – was devastating. Genghis Khan's forces descended in 1219 and, in two years, the ruling Khwarezmid empire was wiped out. Over the following four decades, the Mongols laid waste to the region, destroying its culture and infrastructure, and literally decimating the male population – by the end of the invasion in 1258, the number of Iranian men had fallen from 2.5 million to just 250,000.

The Mongols would rule Iran for the next 80 years, becoming an Ilkhanate under Genghis' grandson Hulagu Khan. The country was gradually rebuilt and began to enjoy some prosperity at the end of the 13th Century, with new trade routes to India and China. However, the Ilkhanate began to collapse with the death of Abu Said Bahadur Khan in 1304; without an appointed successor, the state devolved into separate small kingdoms ruled by the powerful Mongol, Turk and Persian families in the region.

The nation would once again suffer at the hands of the vicious conqueror Timur. Towards the end of the 14th Century, he seized vast swathes of the Middle East and Central Asia, from Bulgaria to the edge of China, from ▶

Getty Images

Saddam Hussein inspects the Kuwait front in Iraq, 1990

KEY FIGURES

KING FAISAL I

When Britain needed someone to head up the newly formed Kingdom of Iraq, it turned to Prince Faisal, the Hashemite ruler of the Arab Kingdom of Syria. Faisal was recruited to lead the Arab Revolt against the Turks in WWI. He would rule Iraq for 23 years, before dying under suspicious circumstances in Switzerland.

ABD AL-KARIM QASIM

The nationalist Iraqi Army General seized power in 1958 in a *coup d'état* known as the 14 July Revolution. King Faisal II, his family and the Prime Minister were assassinated, and Iraq was made into a republic. Qasim's links to communism eventually led to his murder in the Ba'athist coup of 1963.

SADDAM HUSSEIN

A leading member of the Sunni Ba'ath Party, Saddam took part in the Ba'athist coup of 1963, before fleeing to Syria. Tensions within the party led to another coup in 1968, when Saddam became deputy to the new President, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Saddam gained control in 1976 when he forced al-Bakr to resign.

AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI

Khomeini was a religious leader of Shia Islam, and a political activist. His outspoken views on the Shah led him to be exiled for 14 years, during which time he became a cult figure to Muslims worldwide. With the departure of the Shah in 1979, Khomeini became Supreme Leader of the new Islamic theocracy.

SHAH OF IRAN

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was the last member of a Persian monarchy dating back some 2,500 years. He ruled for 38 years until the revolution of 1979, when the tide of public opinion turned against him. At that time, his personal wealth was estimated at in excess of $1billion. He lived in exile for just 18 months until dying of a rare form of cancer in Egypt.

US PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

Tensions between the US and the extremist Muslim rulers of Iran, who had ousted its ally the Shah, saw the US provide arms and intelligence to Iraq. Reagan's administration was embarrassed by the Iran-Contra arms-deal affair and the accidental destruction of an Iranian airliner by the missile cruiser USS Vincennes.

Women of the volunteer paramilitary force Basij, which was created by order of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979

Getty Images

Uzbekistan to Iran, and as far as Baghdad in Iraq. Historians estimate that by the end of his campaigns, his armies had killed 17 million – around five per cent of the world's population.

Timur invaded Iran in 1381, slaughtering thousands and destroying entire cities as he went. His arrival almost signalled the end of the Ottoman empire, too, when its Sultan, Bayezid I, was defeated at the Battle of Ankara in 1402. However, the Timurid empire went into decline with the death of its founder in 1405; Timur's successors fell into dispute and civil war, and by the start of the 16th Century the empire was divided and being pushed back on all fronts.

The Ottoman empire regrouped and began to expand once more, while Iran was eventually reunited by Shah Ismail I, the leader of the Safaviya, a Shia militant religious order in Iranian Azerbaijan. His dynasty lasted 200 years, unified a splintered Iran and was instrumental in converting the Sunni-dominated nation to its present Shiite state.

Mesopotamian conflict

The land along the Tigris-Euphrates river system, originally known as Mesopotamia, has been contested for thousands of years, with control passing from the Babylonians and Assyrians to the Romans, Sassanids and Mongols of the Timurid dynasty. By the mid-1500s, Iraq had fallen under Ottoman control, but throughout its 400-year rule the region was the focus of a struggle for power between rival tribes and the neighbouring empires of the Turks, the Safavids of Persia and the Mamluks of Georgia.

Between 1514 and 1639, the Ottomans and the Persians engaged in five wars, the last of which was concluded with the Treaty of Zuhab. Other treaties would follow, but this one is considered the most significant as it drew the current Turkey-Iran and Iran-Iraq borders, terminating along the Shatt al-Arab waterway that spills into the Persian Gulf.

With the demise of the Ottoman empire at the end of WWI, Iraq fell under British administration. In 1921, the Brits installed the Kingdom of Iraq led by King Faisal I, the Hashemite Prince who'd been recruited by T. E. Lawrence to lead the Arab Revolt against the Turks. The monarchy lasted for over 30 years, but was eventually overthrown in a military *coup d'état* in 1958, and Iraq was proclaimed a republic. However, the ensuing political instability led the way for the Ba'athist coup of 1963 (backed by the US and UK). Formed in the late 1940s, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party called for the unification of the Arab world with freedom from non-Arab interference.

Tensions within the new Ba'athist government led to another coup in 1968, which saw Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr become the new President. He was assisted by Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti, Vice Chairman of the Ba'athist Revolutionary Command Council. And although al-Bakr was notionally in charge, by the end of the 1960s it became clear that it was his deputy who was pulling all the strings.

Saddam Hussein rapidly gained a reputation as a progressive politician, instigating reforms across the country to modernise the economy, industry and infrastructure, and improve education and literacy – for his efforts in introducing welfare services and public healthcare, Saddam received an award from UNESCO. But his vision of a unified and stable Iraq would always be in conflict with a nation divided along ethnic, tribal, religious and economic lines.

Since the days of Ottoman rule, Iraq had been split into three vilayets, or provinces: Mosul in the north, Baghdad in the centre and Basra in the south. Mosul and Basra are populated mainly by Sunni Muslims, while Basra is predominantly Shia.

But the country is also split between the Arab majority in central and southern Iraq, with Kurds and small pockets of Turkmen and Assyrians in the north. The incorporation of the Sunni-dominated Mosul province into the Iraqi state in 1925 was intended to offset the dominance of the Shia, but it brought the Kurds under central rule, which they've opposed ever since.

Alongside Saddam's social reforms, the people also saw an increase in the country's security in an effort to avoid future coups and insurrections. Echoing Hitler's tactics, Saddam cleverly built public support with his welfare programs, while also creating a military regime and cultivating an inner circle of loyal supporters. In 1979, he forced the elderly al-Bakr to resign, and began the systematic execution of hundreds of allegedly "disloyal" Ba'ath Party officials, securing his position as President of Iraq and Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council.

In the same year, Iran was undergoing the transition from absolute monarchy to Islamic republic. For the previous 16 years, the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, had ruled the country as an autocracy with support from the US. The revolution against him was inspired by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a *marja* – or "source of emulation" – in the Shia Islam clergy.

> HISTORIANS ESTIMATE THAT BY THE END OF TIMUR'S CAMPAIGNS, HIS ARMIES HAD KILLED 17 MILLION PEOPLE – AROUND FIVE PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION

Khomeini had long denounced the Shah for his attempts at westernising Iran, his links with the US and Israel, and for causing the spread of moral corruption (although the Shah had also overseen a series of health and social reforms, helped women's suffrage, instituted profit sharing for workers and drastically improved Iraqi income).

Khomeini came into conflict with the Iranian government in the mid-1960s, calling the Shah a "wretched, miserable man" who had "embarked on the [path toward] destruction of Islam in Iran". He was jailed for six months and forced into exile in Iraq, where he stayed for 14 years.

On 17 January 1979, the Shah left the country, ostensibly on holiday, and never

1921

Britain creates the Kingdom of Iraq, following the capture of Baghdad in WWI. Faisal, leader of the Arab rebellion, is placed on the throne.

1941

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi becomes the Shah of Iran after his father's abdication during WWII.

1953

Mohammad Mossadegh, the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, is removed from power by a coup carried out by the CIA and MI6 over fears of communist sympathies. Mossadegh remains a highly popular figure in Iran.

1958

Iraq's monarchy is overthrown by a military coup and declared a republic. General Abd al-Karim Qasim becomes Prime Minister.

1963

Qasim – Minister of Interior in a coup led by the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. Qasim is executed and his body publicly broadcast to prove that he's dead.

returned. His connections to the US, unbridled royal extravagance, and reports of corruption and brutality saw public opinion turn against him. Nationwide strikes and demonstrations brought the country to a standstill and, in December 1978, upwards of six million people marched against the Shah's regime.

Two weeks after the Shah left, Khomeini returned and set about turning Iran from a western-style monarchy to an Islamic republic, with the cleric as the country's Supreme Leader. However, despite Khomeini's popularity, there were still factions that opposed this new theocratic state, which had set about undoing the Shah's program of reforms, and returning the country to Islamic policies. Nationwide uprisings began among the country's secular groups, some of which lasted more than a year and cost thousands of lives.

Territorial dispute

In Khuzestan, an Iranian province on the Persian Gulf, an uprising was started by a local Arab separatist group seeking independence from its new rulers. Saddam Hussein had long claimed Iraqi ownership of the province, and helped foment separatism in the region. In retaliation, Iran began arming the Kurdish troops in the north, who continued to resist control from Baghdad, and provided training camps on Iranian soil. This dispute sparked a number of border wars in the mid-1970s, although Iran's military – built up during a spending spree by the Shah – was more than capable of repulsing Iraq's meagre forces.

This simmering tension seemed to be eliminated with the signing of the Algiers Treaty in 1975, in which Iraq removed limitations on use of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, and Iran promised to stop funding the Kurds. However, the removal of support by Iran and the US saw the Kurdish Peshmerga rebels crushed by Saddam's forces in a brief campaign that cost around 20,000 lives.

Iran's Islamic revolution proved to be something of a double-edged sword: while it removed the Shah, whom Saddam viewed as a common enemy, it also advocated Pan-Islamic policies in direct conflict with Iraq's Arab nationalism.

With Iran in a state of civil and political unrest, and its military effectively disbanded by the ruling theocracy, Saddam Hussein saw his opportunity: a strike against Iran would allow him to liberate the oil-rich Khuzestan province and also dethrone Egypt as the dominant power in the Middle East.

Saddam's Sunni minority rule also faced the prospect of regime change from Shi'ite factions inspired by the Iranian revolution. He believed that the anti-Ba'ath riots in Iraq's Shia areas had been instigated by Iran, and used the assassination of 20 Ba'ath Party officials by Shia militants in 1980 as a pretext to attack.

With a new and fully equipped army, paid for by the oil boom of the 1970s, Saddam launched a full-scale invasion into Iran on 22 September 1980. Surprise air attacks on Iranian air force targets proved ineffective, enabling Iran to launch counter-attacking bombing raids on Iraq. The next day, a two-pronged attack took place, when some 10,000 Iraqi troops invaded southern Iran, and a mechanised infantry division crossed into Iran's central provinces.

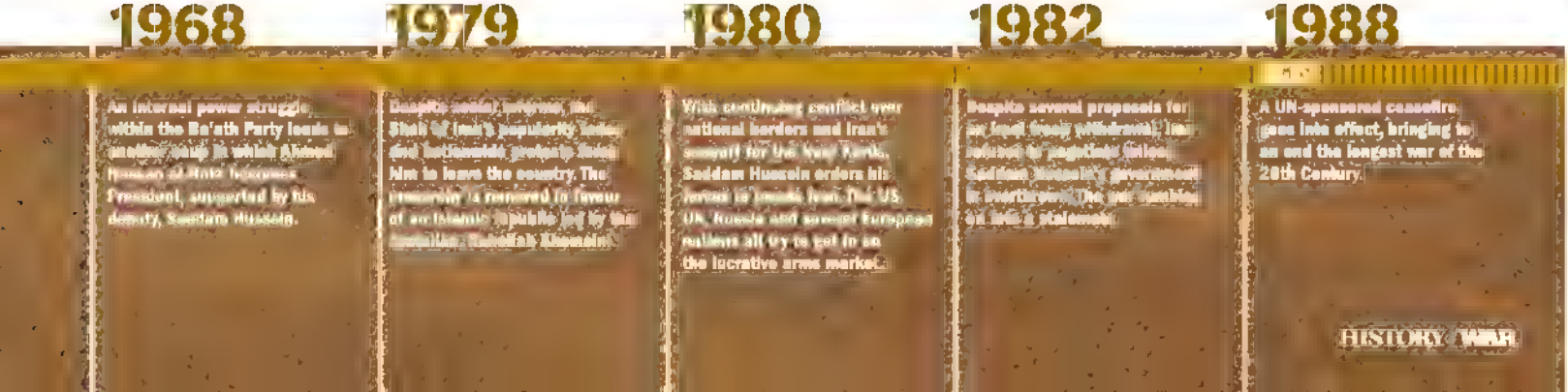
Saddam had banked on the Iranian people turning against their new Islamic republic but, instead, his military action saw them rally to their country's cause; by November, the defenders' numbers had swelled by 200,000.

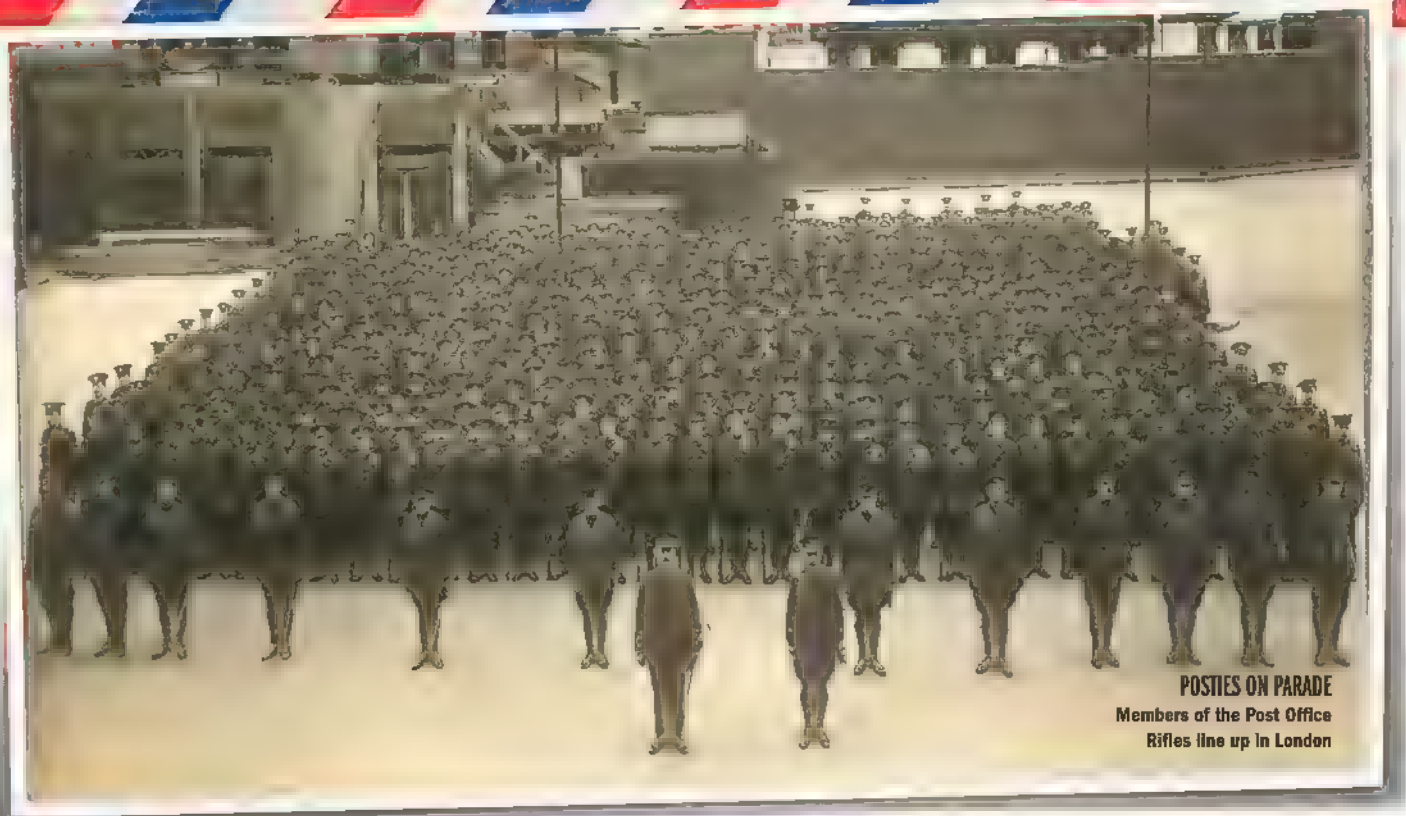
With Iran's air power still effective, Iraq's supplies were destroyed and progress ground to a halt. By the start of 1981, both sides had reached a stalemate, and it was here that Iran introduced "human wave" attacks, in which an absence of heavy weapons was countered by a huge amount of volunteer troops: what they lacked in firepower, they made up for in numbers – and a corresponding amount of casualties.

The war would drag on until 8 August 1988, when only the threat of a full-scale Iraqi assault by its rebuilt military, and chemical weapon strikes against major cities, forced Ayatollah Khomeini to accept the UN ceasefire. The financial cost of the war was only exceeded by the cost in lives, with around a million dead and as many severely wounded. In 1990, Iraqi troops withdrew from Iran, and ownership of the Shatt al-Arab was split between the two countries, more or less as it had been 15 years before.

An Iranian Revolutionary Guard holds his rifle aloft in triumph over a burned-out Iraqi truck, near Qasr-e Shirin, Iran, October 1980

Getty Images


1968
An internal power struggle within the Ba'ath Party leads to another coup in which Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr becomes President, supported by his deputy, Saddam Hussein.
1979
Despite many protests, the Shah of Iran's popularity falters and he is forced to leave the country. The monarchy is removed in favour of an Islamic republic led by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.
1980
With continuing conflict over national borders and Iran's support for the Iraqi Kurds, Saddam Hussein orders his forces to invade Iran. The US, UK, Russia and several European nations all try to get in on the lucrative arms market.
1982
Despite several proposals for an Iraqi troop withdrawal, the relations to negotiate failed. Saddam Hussein's government is overthrown. The war stumbles on into a stalemate.
1988
A UN-sponsored ceasefire goes into effect, bringing to an end the longest war of the 20th Century.
HISTORY OF WAR



POSTIES ON PARADE
Members of the Post Office Rifles line up in London

FROM THE History of war FRONT

MEN *of* LETTERS

First World War: When Britain was plunged into conflict, the men of the Post Office answered the call and were sent to mainland Europe, to serve and die in their thousands

WHEN LORD KITCHENER ISSUED his call to arms a week after the declaration of the First World War in 1914, the men of the Post Office – at the time, the largest employer in the world – didn't disappoint him. Immediately, 11,000 employees volunteered (in total, 75,000 went into service during the conflict). Some signed up for their own local regiments, others with the Royal Engineers Postal Section – which was responsible for transporting mail to and from the frontlines – while a large number joined the organisation's own fighting force, the Post Office Rifles.

Before the war, the Post Office Rifles had consisted of voluntary, part-time soldiers. Formed half a century earlier to guard Post Offices in London in the wake of Irish acts of terror in the capital, they had recently been absorbed into the Territorial Army as the Eighth Battalion of the London Regiment.

The war saw a massive expansion of the Post Office Rifles – as more and more men volunteered, it quickly grew from one battalion to three. But these territorial units had a lot to prove. Many people dismissed them as little more than "Saturday soldiers", and even Lord Kitchener himself referred to them as a "town clerks' army".

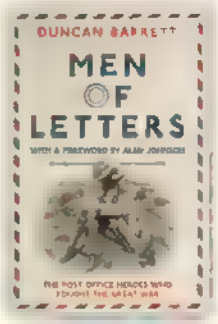
To begin with, the sceptics had a point. Although some of the postmen and messenger boys who gave up their evenings and weekends for drill practice at the Tower of London, and for route marches through the city, had seen action in the Boer Wars before taking up their jobs in the Post Office, many were untested in battle. They had joined up as much for the camaraderie, and for the football and cricket matches held after work in the evenings, as for the military training. And the new recruits who volunteered after the outbreak of war were even less experienced in the practicalities of battle.

Bloodthirsty warriors

However, in the autumn of 1914, the mild-mannered men from the Post Office were transformed into bloodthirsty warriors. In place of jolly weekends drinking beer around a roaring fire at the country estate of one of their aristocratic officers, the Post Office Rifles were put through the wringer of military discipline – first at an Army camp in Crowborough, East Sussex, and then in the grounds of the Leavesden Lunatic Asylum in Hertfordshire, the only building in the area that could accommodate almost a thousand men. The former Post Office workers would train day and night, learning to fire rifles and hurl hand grenades, acting out mock engagements with imaginary enemies, and bayoneting sandbags. By the time they sailed to France in March 1915, they were itching to join the fight and show what they could do.

On the Western Front, the men from the Post Office soon began proving their mettle. In May 1915, the First Battalion of the Post Office Rifles fought bravely at the Battle of Festubert, where they suffered their first real losses. A few months later, they were in action again at Loos, while the following year saw them at the Somme, participating in the successful capture of High Wood.

In January 1917, the Second Battalion – which had been formed in September 1914 and had initially served as a reserve regiment supplying reinforcements for the First Battalion – were called into action. They initially fought at the Second Battle of Bullecourt in France, but in July they were sent across the Belgian border for more pressing matters.



This article is an abridged extract from Duncan Barrett's book *Men Of Letters*, published in paperback by AA Publishing, RRP £8.99.
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Officers, Non-commissioned Officers and Men:

enemy strongpoint, and came under fire from an enemy machine gun.

machine-gun and rifle fire, and without regard to personal risk,

Extract from The London Gazette, 8 November 1917, reporting on the only Victoria Cross awarded to a Post Office Rifleman

When the battalion arrived, the Third Battle of Ypres – known today as Passchendaele, after the village that was its ultimate objective – had a ready been under way for a month, and had descended into a disaster to rival the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

On this occasion, it was the weather that was large y to blame. The timing of the British Second Army's attack could not have been less fortuitous – the rainfall in the area during the summer and autumn of 1917 was five times worse than it had been for either of the prev ous two years. Men in the trenches were often up to their waists in water, and in no man's land the s tuation was even more grim. Injured men could be caught out by a new burst of torrential rainfall, drowning in shell ho es that they were too weak to struggle out of.

To make matters worse, the drainage system in the area was extremely de icate, with an unusual y high water table, and the fortnight-long artillery bombardment that preceded the batt e had turned much of the ground into a kind of murky porridge. Men who had already seen action at the Somme had a rough idea of the quagmire that awaited them, but Passchendae e was far, far worse than anything they had come across in France. Tanks found the ground to be comp ete y impassable, and th ngs weren't much better for the infantrymen. One soldier who fought in the battle wrote at the time, "Fancy fighting Germans for a land like this. If it were mine, I'd give them the whole damn rotten country."

Kind gesture

The Second Battalion had experienced pretty bad mud already. Going up the line in March 1917, a signalman by the name of Rogers had accidentally stepped off a duckboard trail and had begun to sink into the b ack s me.

The Post Office Rifles had been part-time soldiers, formed half a century earlier to guard Post Offices in the wake of Irish acts of terror

Rifleman Kingston had knelt down and tried to he p him, removing the kit Rogers was carrying a piece at a time. But his kind gesture drew the irritation of one of the battalion officers. "You're exposing yourself and the rest of us to danger," Kingston was to d. "If you want to help h m, you're going to have to wait until nightfall."

The rest of the men moved on, but Kingston stayed behind with Rogers, who was gradua ly sinking deeper into the s udge. When darkness fe l, he began working to get his comrade free.

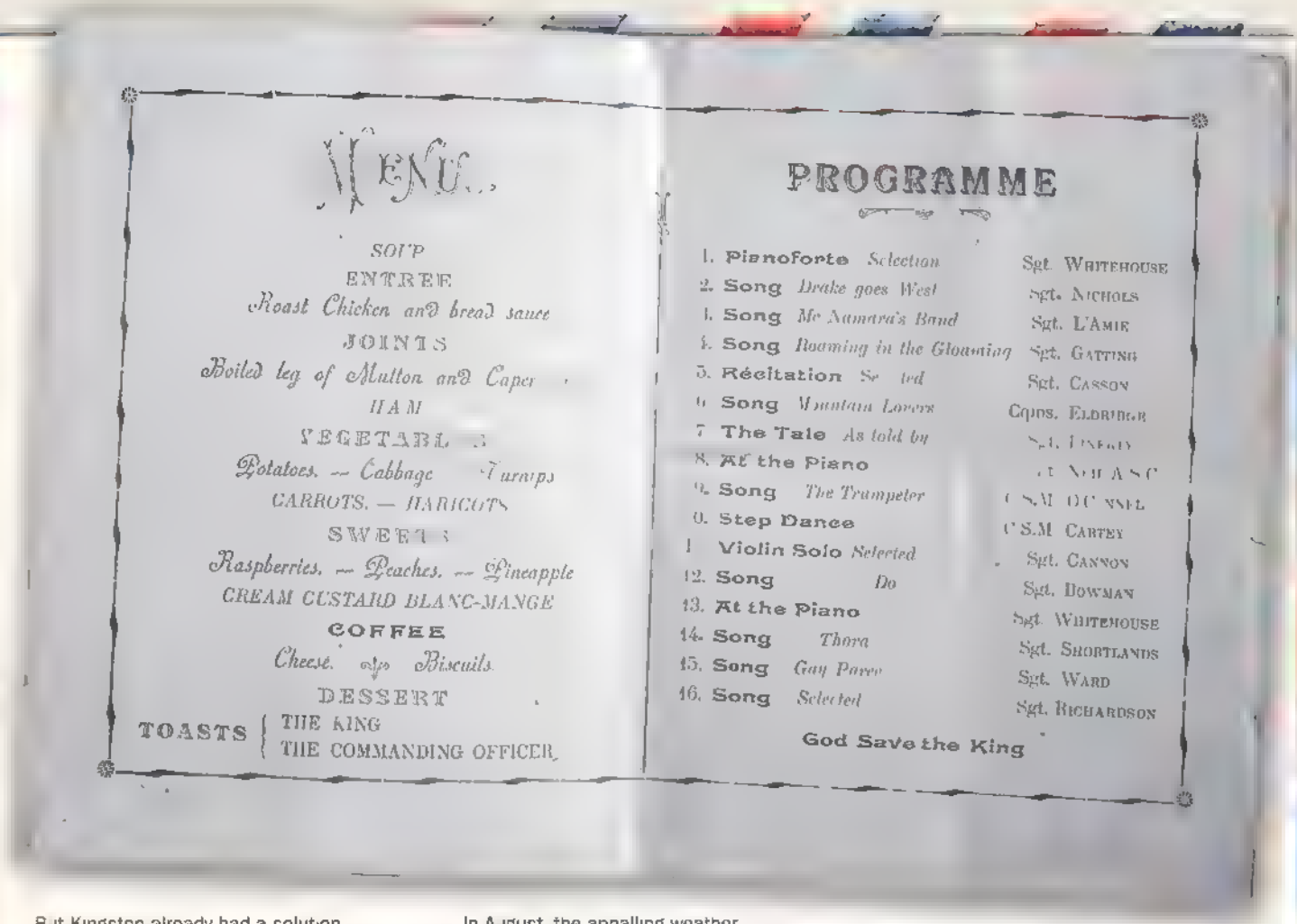
Rogers was buried in mud up to the waist, and the only way Kingston was ab e to get him out was by cutting off h s waders and trousers. Eventually, Rogers was able to slither out of them and clamber up from the s me onto the duckboard trail. He looked quite a sight, covered in the filthy muck from head to foot, w th full military uniform on his top half and nothing but his underwear down below.

MOUNTAIN OF MAIL

Sorting through the post in the Home Depot at Regent's Park, London. Some 75,000 Post Office workers would serve in the armed forces during WWI.

▶ BRAVE KNIGHT

Alfred Knight was the only member of the Post Office Rifles to be awarded the Victoria Cross, which he received for "most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty during the operation against the enemy positions," following his exploits at Passchendaele (see box on previous page). Born in Ladywood, Birmingham, he joined the Post Office as a clerical assistant, working in the North Midland Engineering District. Alfred survived the war and also received an OBE for his services in the Ministry of Labour. He died in Birmingham in 1960, aged 72.



MENU.

SOUP
ENTREE
Roast Chicken and bread sauce
JOINTS
Boiled leg of Mutton and Caper
HAM
VEGETABLES
Potatoes. — Cabbage — Turnips
CARROTS. — HARICOTS
SWEETS
Raspberries. — Peaches. — Pineapple
CREAM CUSTARD BLANC-MANGE
COFFEE
Cheese. & Biscuits
DESSERT
TOASTS { THE KING / THE COMMANDING OFFICER

PROGRAMME

1. Pianoforte	Selection	Sgt. Whitehouse
2. Song	Drake goes West	Sgt. Nichols
3. Song	Mc Namara's Band	Sgt. L'Amie
4. Song	Roaming in the Gloaming	Sgt. Gatting
5. Récitation	Selected	Sgt. Casson
6. Song	Mountain Lovers	Cpls. Eldridge
7. The Tale	As told by	Sgt. Lynch
8. At the Piano		Sgt. Nolan C
9. Song	The Trumpeter	C.S.M. O'Connel
10. Step Dance		C.S.M. Carter
11. Violin Solo	Selected	Sgt. Cannon
12. Song	Do	Sgt. Bowman
13. At the Piano		Sgt. Whitehouse
14. Song	Thora	Sgt. Shortlands
15. Song	Gay Paree	Sgt. Ward
16. Song	Selected	Sgt. Richardson

God Save the King

LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT
The programme for a Post Office Rifles dinner and concert held at the Theatre St-Cecile, Lillers, France, on 7 December 1915.

But Kingston already had a solution. "Take your jersey off," he told his comrade. Rogers promptly removed his tunic, and then the jumper he was wearing underneath it. Then, under Kingston's instruction, he held the garment upside down and stepped into the arm holes. It was an unorthodox pair of leggings, but it was better than nothing.

Broken spine

Not all mud-related crises ended so happily, however. Rifleman Harvey of the First Battalion witnessed another man slide off a duckboard into the mire. When two of his comrades were unable to pull him out between them, they attached a chain to a pair of mules and tried to get him out that way. Through the layers of mud, Harvey heard a crack as the man's spine was broken in the attempt. The mules got him out, but he died not long after.

In the ground around Ypres, the Second Battalion started to witness such horrors on a regular basis. One day, when they were on the move, a man slipped and fell into the quagmire. His friends begged their Sergeant to stop and try to rescue him but, as their comrade began to slide out of sight, there was nothing they could do. Several soldiers could be seen weeping as the man was shot by a former colleague from the Post Office: a bullet in the head was considered preferable to suffocation by mud

In August, the appalling weather led to a temporary halt to the battle, but by the end of the month the sun had begun to shine once more, and Field Marshal Haig was determined to try again. He ordered another massive artillery bombardment, this time lasting a full three weeks, and on 20 September, at 5.40am, the next big push began. This time, the Second Battalion were one of the units going over the top.

Their objective was to capture a section of the German line leading up to Wurst Farm, as part of the Battle of the Menin Road Ridge. The section the Post Office Rifles were charged with taking contained three enemy strongholds, known as Hubner Farm, Genoa Farm and Marine View. The plan was to seize these key points first, and then to force the rest of the Germans in the line to surrender.

As was becoming common practice, the objectives had been marked out on a training ground, and a scale model of the battlefield prepared with viewing galleries 20 feet above from which the men could study it. By the time the Post Office Rifles assembled for battle on the night of 19 September, they knew exactly what they were supposed to be doing.

By 3am, the men were in position and ready to go over the top. In the lull before the whistle was blown, their minds began to wander. One of the Post Office Sergeants, Alfred Knight, was imagining what it must feel like to be a man condemned to execution, trying to get a final night's sleep before taking the walk up to the hangman's noose. It didn't seem a million miles away from the situation he and his men found themselves in now.

Knight was a 29-year-old man from Birmingham who had worked for the Post Office as a clerical assistant in the North Midland Engineering District. He had already been highly praised for his bravery during an attack in France four months earlier – his promotion to Sergeant had come about thanks to "gallant conduct" in helping wounded comrades to safety under heavy fire. But no one could possibly have predicted the extraordinary acts of heroism he was about to commit at Wurst Farm Ridge.

The moment the creeping barrage opened up, the men of the Second Battalion hurled themselves out of their trenches and began the dash across the slippery ground of no man's land. Keeping good note of their training, they hugged the barrage close, and at times the shells were falling less than ▶

Several men wept as the man was shot by a colleague from the Post Office: a bullet in the head was preferable to suffocation by mud

a dozen yards in front of them. They made fast progress across the terrain, but the casualties were heavy. Soon, both No. 1 and No. 3 Companies were without any officers at all – every one of them had been either killed or badly wounded.

Sergeant Knight, though, seemed to be protected by some kind of magic charm. He was carrying on his person every one of the various objects that were popularly supposed to stop a bullet – and, as the morning wore on, every one of them did: a cigarette case, a miniature picture frame and even a book were all torn or smashed to pieces, but the Sergeant remained free from injury.

It was not for lack of bravery. When Sergeant Knight saw a group of men from No. 2 Company under fire from a German machine gun, he stormed up to the gun emplacement and captured the position. Then, with a cry of, "I'm after this, boys!", he charged on to a second post, shooting and bayonetting several enemy troops there and causing the rest of them to scatter.

But all the heroism in the world was no use against the force of the mud. Soon, the Sergeant lost his footing and found himself buried up to the waist, his face and tunic spattered all over. There was another stronghold up ahead, and a group of Germans there were shooting at some of Alfred's comrades. Without stopping to consider his own safety, he opened fire on them and, soon, half a dozen lay dead.

The remaining Germans returned fire and Alfred felt the bullets ping off his helmet. He watched as the spray from a machine gun drew patterns in the mud all around him. But somehow, he was able to extricate himself and clamber up to relative safety.

When Sergeant Knight saw men from No. 2 Company under fire, he stormed up to the gun emplacement and captured it single-handedly

With hardly any officers left on the battlefield, Alfred rounded up a group of survivors and issued his own orders. He could see a platoon struggling to take one of the farmhouses, so he brought his band of men up to offer assistance, firing on the enemy's flank and giving his comrades the chance they needed to claim victory.

As one suitably impressed eyewitness later commented, "It is not exaggerating to suggest that the entire command of the troops in these operations fell on Sergeant Knight, and had he failed, the chances are that the whole of the work put into that particular push would have been in vain."

Alfred Knight's heroism and quick thinking paid off handsomely. Before long, the battalion had secured all three strongholds, and the Germans were beginning to surrender. It was a costly battle for the Post Office Rifles, with 90 men killed and many more seriously injured, but, thanks in large part to Sergeant Knight, the operation had been a success. More generally, across the eight-mile front of the advance, things had gone well too, and by noon most of the Army's objectives had been successfully achieved.

For his part in the Battle of Wurst Farm Ridge, Alfred was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest honour for gallantry in the British Army. When he returned home on leave to receive the medal from King George V, he found himself treated as a celebrity. In his home city of Birmingham, he was feted with a ceremonial presentation and invited to address the assembled masses.

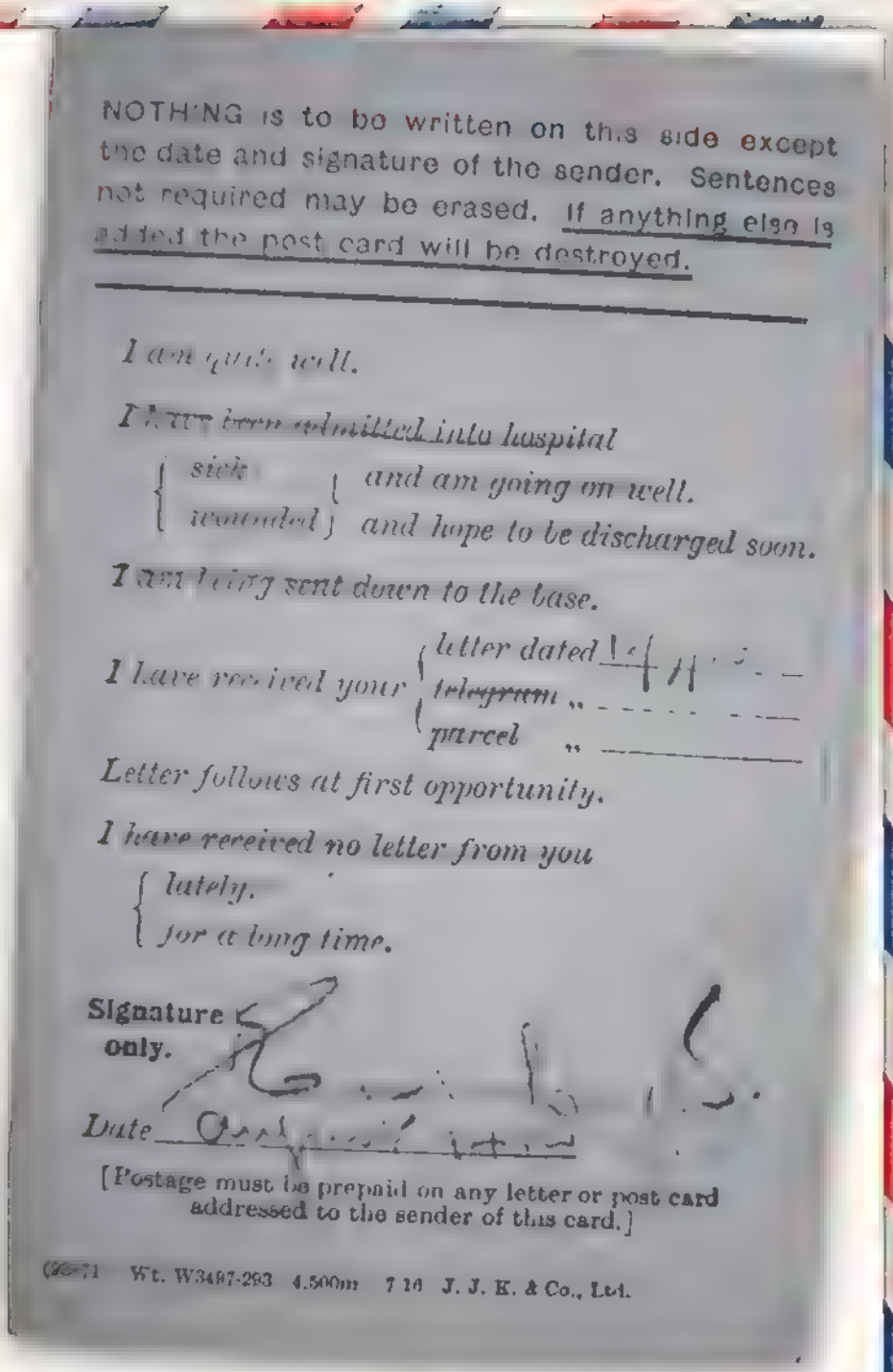
When members of the public asked him what they could do to help the men at the front, Alfred had a simple answer for them. What the men valued more than anything else, he told them, were letters. If the people in the crowd wanted to help boost morale in the trenches, the most important thing they could do was pick up a pen and write. It was hard to imagine that this war hero had once been a mere clerical worker but, in his heart, Alfred was still one of the men from the Post Office.

▼ **COMRADES IN ARMS**

Sergeant Alfred Knight (pictured holding a pipe) with his comrades of the Post Office Rifles. Two battalions served at Ypres, Passchendaele, Loos and the Somme, with the loss of around 1,800 men and a further 4,500 wounded.

▶ MESSAGE HOME

A field-service postcard sent by author Duncan Barrett's great-great-uncle. The cards were used by soldiers for speed, as they didn't require censoring.



NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

I am quite well.

I have been admitted into hospital { sick / wounded } and am going on well.

and hope to be discharged soon.

I am being sent down to the base.

I have received your { letter dated 14 / telegram „ / parcel „ }

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you { lately. / for a long time.

Signature only.

Date

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

(29-71) Wt. W3497-293 4,500m 7/16 J. J. K. & Co., Ltd.

While Alfred was back in Blighty giving speeches, for his comrades in the Second Battalion the horrors of the Western Front continued. A month after the attack at Wurst Farm Ridge, they were ordered back to the front line to participate in the battle for Passchendaele itself. It was to be a night operation, with the Post Office Rifles going over just before dawn. Once again, they were given a series of enemy strongholds to conquer, all of them former farms or houses.

There was no trench from which to launch the attack – instead, the men followed a fragile duckboard trail through fields of sinister black slime until they reached a white line taped out on the ground. Here, they silently prostrated themselves, clinging to the muddy earth beneath them or hiding behind the lip of a shell hole as they waited for the signal to advance.

Sitting ducks

For the men from the Post Office, the attack was an unmitigated disaster. Even before they began to move forward, many of them were caught by the shells of the creeping barrage, which were falling dangerously close to their positions. As soon as they did start to advance, they found themselves stuck in impassable mud, and while they struggled to heave their legs out of the morass, they were sitting ducks for enemy snipers.

The lucky ones made it to the relative safety of a shell hole, but once the sun came up and the Germans could see across the battlefield, there was little chance of advancing any further. At the slightest hint of movement, they would be hit by a torrent of gunfire.

Rifleman Fred Shewry was one of the men left cowering in a shell hole for the rest of that long October day. Every so often, a shell would fall nearby, almost deafening Fred and the men who were with him, and showering them with a fresh layer of mud and slime. All around, they could see the remains of what had once been their comrades.

For some, the endless waiting, soaked to the skin and exposed to the bitterly cold air, became too much to bear. "I can't stand this any longer," one man told Fred, before standing up and making for a nearby British pillbox. He got only a few steps away from the shell hole before he went down, shot through the head by a sniper.

As darkness fell, Fred and the other survivors made their way carefully back to their starting positions. They crawled on their hands and knees, often sinking up to their armpits in the mire. At one point, Fred's rifle was swallowed by the mud and, try as he might, he was unable to get it back. He felt desperate, like a fly trapped on flypaper. Eventually, however, Fred and his comrades reached the safety of the British positions.

The surviving Post Office Rifles had little hope of taking any of their objectives now, with so many men out of action. In the day's failed attack, over 120 of them had been killed – and the battalion had not gained a thing. Among the dead was the 1,000th Post Office Rifleman to perish since the start of the war: Lance Corporal Bailey, a 24-year-old former postman from Walworth in London.

Terrible losses

The men felt deeply dispirited, both at the terrible losses they had sustained, and at their failure to make any headway in the battle. But when they were visited by their divisional commander a few days later, he seemed to be in a surprisingly upbeat mood. "I always thought you were a lot of stamp-lickers," the General told them frankly, "but the way you fought – you went over like bloody savages!"

The men soon learned the reason for the General's good spirits. As it turned out, the Army had never intended the Post Office Rifles to capture any of their objectives. Their attack had been nothing more than a diversion, designed to draw the Germans' attention away from the real advance being made by some Canadian units.

Since the Canadians had ultimately proved successful in taking the village of Passchendaele, the General was delighted. However, the Post Office men were left with a bitter taste in their mouths. As they saw it, over a hundred of their lads had been killed in an attack that had been designed to fail from the offset. Some blamed the battalion's own commander, Lieutenant Colonel Derviche-Jones (known unofficially as "Kill-Boche Jones" for the bloodthirsty speeches he made before every battle). They felt that he had been too quick to offer his men up as a sacrifice, just to please those above him in the chain of command.

-year-old Congolese Colon
Ciawan, nicknamed "the
paniese" for his fast skills
combat. The Red Cross and
ed Crescent charities have
appealed to governments to outlaw
children's participation in war

WAR IN THE CONGO

Africa's Great War: As the 20th Century came to an end, the costliest conflict since the Second World War engulfed Central Africa, apparently sparked by 1994's Rwandan Genocide. Nick Soldinger reveals that its true cause was rooted in the region's brutal colonial past...

APRIL 6TH 1994, 8.21pm. Kigali, Rwanda. The pilot of a Falcon-50 corporate jet requests permission to land at Kigali International Airport. On board are seven Rwandan officials, the President of Burundi, and Rwanda's dictator Juvénal Habyarimana, aka "Kinani" – the "invincible one".

Kinani has ruled Rwanda for over 20 years, overseeing a regime that has treated the country's Tutsi minority no better than dogs. Lately, though, the dogs have bitten back. A three-year long civil war ended with a peace agreement promising the Tutsis a share of power. That was in August the previous year. The treaty still hasn't been ratified, though, and the UN, backed by the US, is piling on the pressure for Kinani to comply. As his plane circles the airport, the dictator's grip on power is slipping, and he knows it. So do the men he's led all these years. Men like Hutu hardliner Colonel Théoneste Bagasora, who responded to the terms of the peace treaty by warning the Tutsis to "prepare for the apocalypse".

All images © Getty

HUTU HARDLINERS SEIZED POWER AND WENT ABOUT THEIR WORK WITH MACHETE, RIFLE AXE AND CLUB

At 8.26pm, as Kinani's plane begins its descent, two "shooting stars", as one eyewitness later puts it, slice through the night sky, zooming up from the direction of the Kanombe barracks, five miles to the south – home to Kinani's Presidential guard. What the eyewitness sees, however, aren't comets but surface-to-air missiles – Soviet built SAM16s. One misses, the other finds its quarry, smashing into the aircraft at 1,000mph. The jet erupts, igniting the sky, and the explosion is heard by every Hutu and Tutsi in the city. Colonel Bagasora's apocalypse is about to begin...

Twisted corpses

The Tutsi leader Paul Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) were immediately blamed for the assassination. The Hutu hardliners seized power and, over the next 100 days, went about their work with machete, rifle, axe and club. When the killing was over, the twisted corpses of over 800,000 Tutsis – men, women, children, babies – lay rotting in the streets and fields, or floating bloated in the rivers and lakes.

Was Kagame's RPF responsible for Kinani's assassination? It's a matter that's still disputed to this day. What isn't disputed is what happened next. While the UN's response to the genocide was infamously lumbering, Kagame's was not. Backed and armed by the US, his army, which had been hemmed in behind a ceasefire line north of Rwanda along the Ugandan border, swept down and by the end of July had driven the Hutu leadership from power, and sent over two million Hutu refugees scurrying west over the border into Zaire. The stage was now set for a conflict that would result in more ▶

A group of women in Accra, Ghana, take part in a mourning parade for Patrice [illegible]

FOUR MONTHS LATER, LUMUMBA WAS HANDED OVER TO SECESSIONIST THUGS, TORTURED, BEATEN AND SHOT

than five million further deaths, and affect the lives of around 180 million people as it drew in nine countries, including Burundi, Angola and Zimbabwe. It would become known as Africa's Great War, and would be fought across the continent's entire belly, in the country then known as Zaire

Gunned down

Today, Zaire is known as Congo – the original name 19th-century European colonialists ascribed to the region after the mighty river that loops its way through its mineral-rich basin and endless rainforests. The colonialists were Belgians who, in 1885, under the orders of their King, Leopold II, claimed the land in his name. It became his personal plaything and, over the next 23 years, he made, in today's money, a billion-dollar fortune from it, via forced labour, ivory and rubber, before handing it over to the Belgian state. His financial gain came at the cost of up to 15 million lives, as the local population was gunned down, burnt out, starved and enslaved. It was one of history's worst genocides, and yet remains so obscure that nobody can be sure how many actually died. At first, Leopold's brigands came for ivory and rubber but, in their pursuit of these resources, they soon discovered that the soil was alive with minerals: gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt, coltan, manganese, uranium, tin and iron all teemed in the Congolese earth.

Such a land was never going to be left in peace (it's estimated that it still has 24 trillion dollars' worth of untapped mineral deposits – equivalent to the combined GDP of the EU and the US), and so it came to be that by the end of the 20th Century, the Congolese people had become cursed by the riches that lay beneath their feet. The Rwandans, Zimbabweans, Ugandans, even the Congolese, all claimed to have noble reasons for waging a war that was to kill so many and plunge Central Africa into a desperate darkness. But what really drove these men, and the men who led them, and the men who backed them, was good, old-fashioned greed.

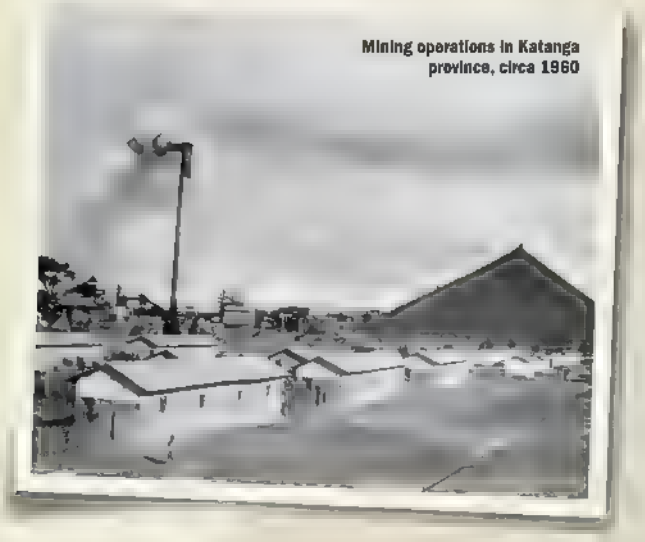
Among the mass of Hutu refugees who fled into Zaire in July 1994 were countless members of the Interahamwe, the militias that had annihilated the Tutsis. They hid themselves in plain view among the people on whose behalf they'd committed mass murder. Telling who was a fleeing war criminal and who a displaced farmer in the scores of squalid refugee camps that mushroomed in Zaire's border provinces of North and South Kivu was nigh on impossible. Not that Kagame's troops would have much interest in discriminating between the two if they ever got the opportunity for revenge – an opportunity that Kagame was hurriedly engineering.

By 1996, the militias in the camps were apparently well organised enough to mount cross-border raids back into Rwanda. They were, Kagame also insisted, staging attacks on the local Banyamulenge people – the ethnic Tutsis in South Kivu. As the year drew to a close, an armed insurgency suddenly sprung up in the province to resist this reported threat from the Hutus. Led by Laurent Kabila, a Congolese-born former bar owner with a taste for whisky and revolutionary politics, the insurgency was as suspiciously well equipped as it was swiftly organised. Before long, Kabila's vigilantes would turn their attention towards the country's capital, Kinshasa, 1,200 miles to the west. The aim, it soon became clear, wasn't simply to go after the Hutus, but the country's seat of power. Kabila, it seemed, was being backed to topple Zaire's long-term dictator, Mobuto Sese Seko. For more than 30 years, President Mobuto had been the West's go-to guy in Central Africa. He'd been installed as leader of Zaire in 1965, after the so-called Congo Crisis.

Poisoned toothpaste

In 1960, when Belgian colonial rule came to an end, the country's first-ever democratically elected leader, Patrice Lumumba, was voted in as Prime Minister of the newly named Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At that time, Congo was so underdeveloped, the Belgians believed they could relinquish administrative control of the country, without losing grip of its resources. There was no real infrastructure in place for nation-building – few roads or railways, and barely a trained native engineer or architect in the land. Belgium's 75 years of colonial rule had taken much but contributed little. The Congolese may have wrestled their land back, but in the eyes of their former overlords they were children, who would need the guidance and technical expertise of their European superiors if they were to survive – services the Belgians would, of course, charge handsomely for.

The left-leaning Lumumba, however, had other ideas, using his Independence Day speech to remind his countrymen that they'd had to endure years of "humiliating slavery" under the Belgians, and how their "proud struggle" now left them both "liberated and equal" to those who'd once ruled them. Such sentiments spooked the West. Not least a major, Belgian-owned mining conglomerate in the country, which reacted by initiating a secession st movement in the mineral-rich


Mining operations in Katanga province, circa 1960

Then-US President Ronald Reagan meets Mobutu Sese Seko in Washington DC, 1983

Katanga province in Congo's south-east – home, incidentally, to the impressionable 21 year-old Laurent Kabila. The Belgians bankrolled a private army to force the secession through, and any cut-throat willing to kill for cash was invited to join – white Rhodesians, South Africans and Europeans, including Nazi veterans of World War Two, all rushed to join its ranks.

Not that the Belgian businessmen needed to worry. As far as Cold War America was concerned, this Lumumba guy was clearly a commie, and he needed to go. The CIA plotted his assassination, planning at one point to kill him with poisoned toothpaste. But in the end, they plumped for a coup, backing Mobutu – then a 30-year-old army officer – to lead it. Within 12 weeks of his election, Lumumba was in prison. Four months later, he was handed over to secessionist thugs in Katanga, tortured, beaten and shot.

W CONRAD'S CONGO

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO IS THE SETTING FOR JOSEPH CONRAD'S 1899 NOVEL *HEART OF DARKNESS*. THE NOVEL TACKLES THEMES OF COLONIALISM AND RACISM.

Phoney display

Mobutu was then installed as dictator. To prove to the people that he was more than just a puppet of the West, he embarked on a campaign of pro-African awareness and renamed the country Zaire. But it was a phoney display of African pride as cheap as the leopard-skin toque that adorned his head at all future photo-calls. As far as Capitol Hill was concerned, they had their man. Rabidly anti-communist, corrupt, compliant and as greedy as Leopold, Mobutu would be Washington's favourite African dictator. At least until the Cold War ended.

Zairian Tutsi rebel children soldiers play with AK-47 Kalashnikov assault rifles and sub-machine guns, 1996

By the time of the Rwandan Genocide, the West had tired of Mobutu. Containing communism in Africa had been a priority during the Cold War, and Mobutu had certainly had his uses, interfering in both Sudan and Angola, where pro-Soviet coups had been successfully stymied. By the mid-Nineties, though, the pack was being reshuffled, and Mobutu – whose record of human-rights abuses was dwarfed only by the amount of cash he'd embezzled from his own treasury – was a card the Americans no longer needed, nor wanted, in their hand. He'd become expendable and if he was to be replaced by a puppet – and one who'd been personally mentored by Che Guevara, no less – then so be it. Laurent Kabila would be Congo's next dictator. Another coup was hatched.

The First Congo War, as it was called, was short-lived. Starting on 26 October 1996, it lasted just over six months. It began with Kabila's forces seizing vast swathes of Congolese territory in the east. By Christmas, they were in complete control, but there was to be no good will to all men. With the US and the UN "looking the other way", and supported by forces from Burundi, Uganda and, most notably, Rwanda, the Tutsis exacted a revenge on the Hutus that may not have taken as many lives (an estimated 200,000 were massacred in the Hutu refugee camps), but was no less barbaric. The official line might have been that the Tutsis were exacting a just punishment on the *génocidaires*, but the truth was that they slaughtered anyone who failed to run fast enough. Man, woman or child.

With the new year came a new ally – Angola to Kinshasa's south. With its support, Kabila felt confident enough to take the capital, and turned his campaign westward. Mobutu's forces offered little resistance, and the inevitable overthrow was slowed only by the country's appalling lack of infrastructure. By May, an ailing

LAURENT KABILA (1939-2001)

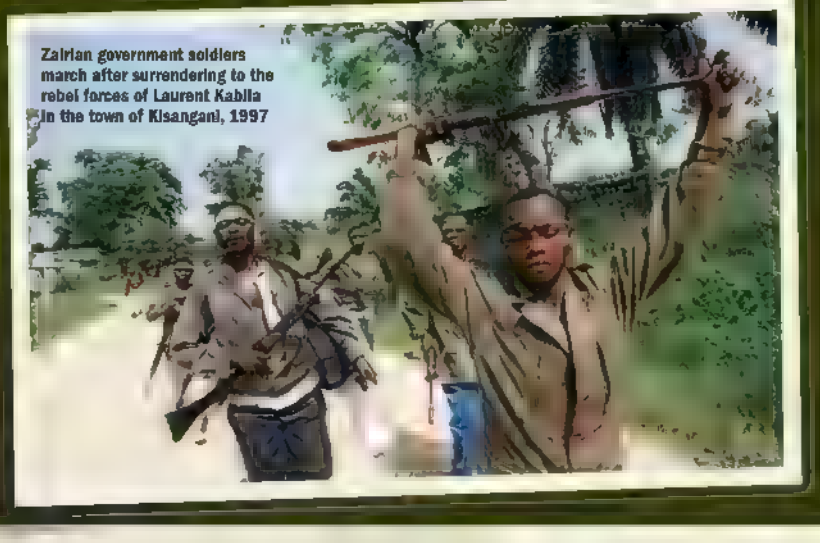
When Laurent Kabila suddenly came to power in 1997 – the apparent puppet-leader of a Rwandan-inspired coup – hardly anyone had heard of the man who ousted Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko. The outgoing dictator knew who Kabila was, however, as the pair of them had had beef going right back to Congo's immediate post-colonial past.

Mobutu had seized power in the early 1960s, after a CIA-backed coup had left the democratically elected Patrice Lumumba full of bullet holes. Kabila, who'd returned from France as a Marxist after studying politics there, was a Lumumba supporter, and his hero's execution set him off on the path as a revolutionary-turned-opportunist.

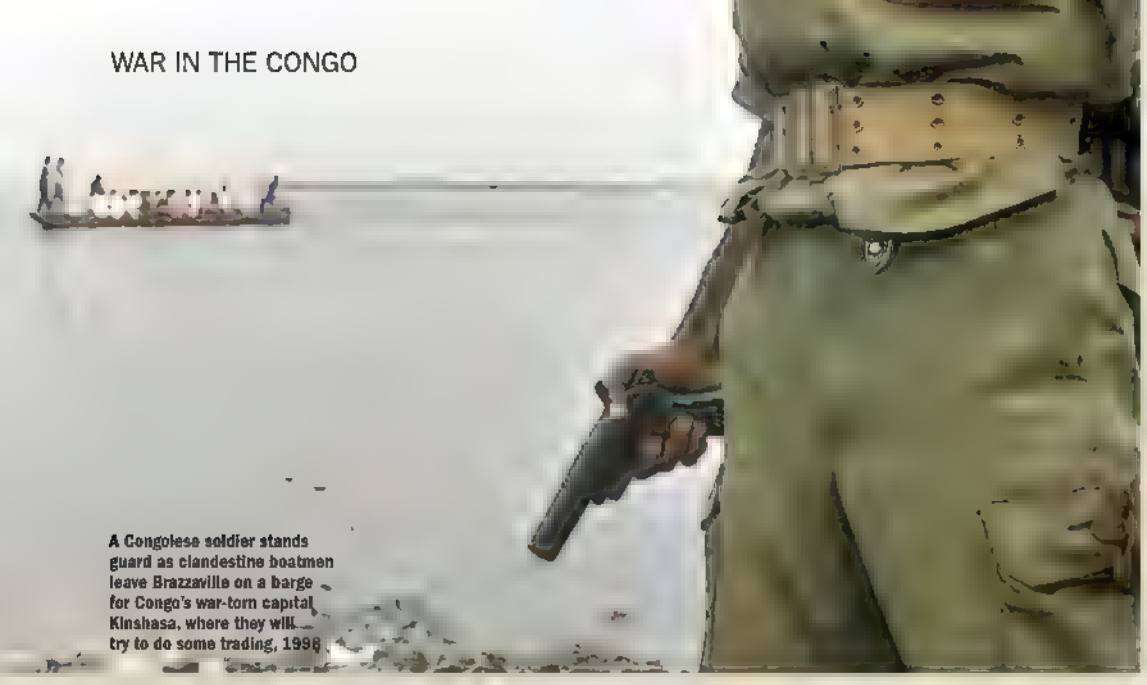
During Congo's ensuing civil war, Kabila fled to the eastern edge of the country, where, in 1963, he set up a rebel enclave and made a lot of noise about toppling Mobutu. In 1965, the poster boy of the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara, turned up offering to help. The exasperated Argentine spent six months trying to forge Kabila and his men into an effective force, before sighing loudly and hoofing it back to Havana. In his diaries, he complained about Kabila's lack of commitment to the cause, opting now, rather than fight, he preferred to hang out in "the best hotels, drinking scotch with beautiful women." Concluded Guevara, "Nothing leads me to believe he is the man of the hour."

Kabila brought misery to millions

Thirty years later, however, Kabila was the leader of the DRC, having spent most of his life in the political wilderness while exiled in Tanzania. In the intervening years, he'd variously set himself up as a warlord, smuggler, bar owner and kidnapper. He was essentially a small-time gangster who, when he was plucked from obscurity and parachuted onto the world stage, used his criminal smarts to cling to power for four years – bringing misery and death to millions in the process.



Zairian government soldiers march after surrendering to the rebel forces of Laurent Kabila in the town of Kisangani, 1997



A Congolese soldier stands guard as clandestine boatmen leave Brazzaville on a barge for Congo's war-torn capital, Kinshasa, where they will try to do some trading, 1998

THE PEACE HAD MERELY BEEN A CEASEFIRE. NOW THE REAL KILLING WOULD BEGIN

Mobutu had fled to Morocco, and Kabila had installed himself in the Presidential Palace. From here, he reverted the name of the country back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and named himself the country's undisputed leader. It wasn't, however, how many Congolese citizens viewed him.

With the overthrow complete, and the threat from Mobutu dying with him when he succumbed to cancer four months after the ceasefire, there was no reason for the foreign troops – particularly the Rwandans – to hang around. And yet, there they were, in the bars and cafés, or on the street corners of Kinshasa, while in the east of the country, they occupied the provinces of North and South Kivu, regions rich in coltan deposits – a mineral used widely by the electronics industry – as well as vast gold and tin reserves. It was a huge area – effectively the size of Greece – and richer in resources than the whole of Rwanda.

Criticism of Kabila grew louder. Rather than seeing him as a liberator, his own people now claimed that he was little more than a pawn of foreign powers, just as his predecessor had been. At this point, an increasingly isolated Kabila took an outrageous gamble – one that his Rwandan puppet-masters and their US backers could never have dreamt that he'd dare take. He cut the strings.

In June 1998, perhaps realising what the Tutsis – both Rwandan and Congolese – were up to, he secretly approached the largest and most determined mercenary force in his country – the Interahamwe, the Hutu militias that his rebellion had been created to destroy. A month later, in late July, he dismissed his Rwandan Chief of Staff, General James Kabarebe, thanked Rwanda for its help, and invited his military ally to leave the country.

The touch-paper was lit. A few days later, on 2 August, the DRC's 10th Brigade, stationed in North Kivu's capital, Goma, declared itself in open revolt against Kabila. That same day, Rwandan Army units invaded from the east, while in Kinshasa a firefight broke out between Congolese Tutsis and forces loyal to Kabila. The Tutsis were routed, and Kabila ordered that all remaining Tutsis in the capital be hunted down. The peace had merely been a ceasefire. Now the real killing would begin.

Audacious plan

Although Rwanda and her allies had powerful forces assembled in the east of the DRC, Kabila had no reason to panic. After all, it had taken him months to reach Kinshasa when he and his rebellion had started from a similar position the previous year, and he'd faced little resistance. When the Rwandans came, they would not only face the same topographic obstacles that his army had, but determined opposition, too. Many Congolese were by now convinced of Kabila's leadership, and were rallying around him to repel the invaders. In the meantime, Kabila could broker deals with his neighbours to the south, west and north to raise support for his fledgling regime – after all, he had plenty to bribe them with.

The Rwandan alliance, however, was not about to afford Kabila the luxury of time, and a daring plan was devised. As the offensive in the east escalated, they would airlift an army 1,200 miles across the country to Kitona air base, 200 miles west of Kinshasa near the Atlantic coast. This airborne assault would then march east, seizing key objectives, before attacking Kinshasa. Along the way, it would absorb Congolese deserters, dissidents and the Tutsi soldiers who had fled Kinshasa into its ranks. Meanwhile, a Rwandan "fifth column" would go to work in the city, distributing arms and recruiting combatants. It was audacious to say the least, but the Rwandans had just the man to lead such a mission; someone who knew Kinshasa's

TIMELINE

1885 FEBRUARY – Belgian ruler Leopold II announces the establishment of the Congo Free State, headed by himself.

1908 NOVEMBER – An ageing Leopold hands over control of Congo to the Belgian state, having made a personal fortune from it. Millions have been killed during his control of the region. He dies in his palace at Laeken a year later.

1960 JUNE – After years of anti-colonial riots, Congo becomes independent, with Patrice Lumumba elected as Prime Minister. He quickly announces a rejection of Belgian influence in the region.

1961 JULY – Backed by Belgian mining interests, Katanga province declares itself independent from Congo. Belgian and UN troops are sent in as civil war escalates.

1961 JANUARY – Prime Minister Lumumba is murdered, reportedly with US and Belgian complicity.

1963 JANUARY – Katanga's bid for secession is called off.

1965 NOVEMBER – General Joseph Mobutu is installed as dictator.

THE BELLIGERENTS

They may be called the Congo Wars, but these bloody conflicts saw the involvement of numerous nations, as political agendas, long-standing feuds and greed were thrown into a melting pot of murder and mayhem. While the African Great War is now over, there remains an uneasy peace between the countries involved, and the feeling is that – with Congo still sitting on a vast wealth of natural resources, these tensions could erupt again at any time...

SUDAN Although never officially involved, Sudan's troops clashed with Ugandan forces along its own border, as well as supplying anti-Ugandan rebel groups in retaliation for Ugandan support of anti-Sudanese rebel groups.

UGANDA Long-standing Tutsi alliances in Uganda ensured the country's military involvement in the war. The riches to be plundered from the DRC persuaded it to dig in (literally) for the duration.

CHAD Encouraged by France, which was keen to regain influence in the region, Chad sent 2,000 troops to the DRC's aid. Its involvement was short-lived, however. Accused of human-rights violations and losing from the start, they soon withdrew.

RWANDA After Hutu militias fled to Congo to find protection under the Mobutu regime, Rwanda established a Congolese insurgency to topple Mobutu. When Rwanda's appointed successor, Kabila, then sided with the Hutus, a second war broke out.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO After the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, the fleeing Hutu perpetrators brought vengeance-seeking Tutsis in their wake. Along with their allies, these began to plunder the DRC's vast natural resources.

ANGOLA Supported Kabila throughout – firstly to help him topple Mobutu in retaliation for his previous backing of Angolan rebels, and then to prevent a power vacuum evolving that might help these same insurgents.

NAMIBIA Officially drawn into the conflict on the DRC's side due to a trade agreement, Namibia's real reason was to defend the lucrative mining concessions it had in the country. Its influence, while minimal, attracted huge international criticism.

BURUNDI Like Rwanda, Burundi was ethnically split between Hutus and Tutsis. A civil war raging there ensured the country's involvement as fighting spilled across its borders with the DRC.

ZIMBABWE Its well-equipped troops played a key role in defending Kinshasa in 1998. Its air force later helped keep the Rwandan advance at bay. The price of its support? Access to diamond seams in the south of the DRC.

backstreets and Kabila's tactical thinking intimately, and the country to the west of the city well – General Kabarebe, Kabila's recently sacked Chief of Staff.

The Rwandan plan was as brilliant as it was bold. This wasn't just a way of causing Kabila a headache on a different front; it was a way of targeting Congo's economic umbilical chord, the Bas-Congo province. This region west of the capital forms a corridor of land that links Congo's vast interior with its only access to the sea – a slender 27-mile coastline on the Atlantic. Bas-Congo is the country's smallest province, but strategically it's vital. Not only is it home to the country's main sea port at Matadi, but also Congo's only oil reserves and its primary source of electricity, the Inga dam complex. If successful, the operation could end the war swiftly. Only one thing presented a real threat to that success – the intervention of Angola. The country had sided with Kabila's uprising the previous year, and had proved instrumental in tipping the balance. Angolan territory lay mainly to the south of the airbase, but it also held land to the north, in the enclave of Cabinda. The Angolan Army was big – its 112,000 soldiers alone outnumbered ▶

1971 1989 1994 1996 1997 2000

OCTOBER
Mobutu renames the country Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko, in an attempt to prove that he's a genuine post-colonial African leader, not the West's puppet.

THROUGHOUT
After decades of embezzlement by Mobutu, Zaire defaults on loans from Belgium. Development programmes are cancelled. The economy begins to spiral out of control.

APRIL-JULY
The Rwandan Genocide results in the murder of some 800,000 Tutsis and a change of government in Kigali, as a Tutsi army under the leadership of Paul Kagame drives two million Hutus over the border into Zaire.

DECEMBER
Tutsi rebels capture huge chunks of eastern Zaire.

MAY
Laurent Kabila, backed by Rwanda, captures the Zairian capital, Kinshasa, and is installed as the country's new dictator. Zaire is renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

AUGUST
After Kabila tries to sling his Rwandan backers out of the country, Rwanda and Uganda invade the DRC and advance on Kinshasa. Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia send troops to repel them.

FEBRUARY
After a 1999 peace accord is struck but not observed, the UN sends a 5,500-strong UN peacekeeping force to the country. It makes little impact.

The Inga dam complex, located 220 miles south-west of Kinshasa, was seized by James Kabarebe's rebels in August 1998. However, with help from his neighbours, President Kabila was soon able to recapture it

the combined troops of the Rwandan alliance – and, after a 20-year civil war, it was battle-hardened. Angola's support – or, at the very least, its neutrality, was vital.

For the moment, Angola stood on the sidelines watching silently. So Kabarebe loaded his planes, kissed the crucifix around his neck and gave the order to go. By the morning of 4 August, his 1,200-strong contingent had boots on the runway at Kitona air base. Its defenders had swiftly capitulated, and were soon persuaded to switch sides by the kitbags full of US dollars Kabarebe had brought with him. Other objectives, such as the nearby petrol works and port, were also quickly seized and, in subsequent days, additional flights brought in another 3,000 troops. The contingent began its march east, collecting fighters to its cause as it went. Within two weeks, Kabarebe had captured the Inga dam complex, immediately ordering its hydroelectric turbines be shut down. Congo was being plunged back into darkness.

An outmanoeuvred Kabila scrambled for allies. He lobbied his neighbours for military assistance as Kabarebe's

KABAREBE LOADED HIS PLANES, KISSED THE CRUCIFIX AROUND HIS NECK AND GAVE THE ORDER TO GO

PRESIDENT PRIVILEGES

THE LATE CONGOLESE PRESIDENT MOBUTU SESE SEKO WAS NOTORIOUS FOR HIS LAVISH LIFESTYLE, WHICH INCLUDED CONCORDE-FLOWN SHOPPING TRIPS TO PARIS.

contingent marched ever closer. Panic now engulfed the capital, and thousands fled in terror. Then, on 22 August, with Kabarebe less than 20 miles from Kinshasa, Angola picked a side.

The next day, Angolan President José Dos Santos sent 2,500 troops, supported by tanks and aircraft, to defend Kinshasa. They attacked the Rwandan-held airfield at Kitona, overwhelmed the Rwandan rearguard and severed Kabarebe's line of retreat. Unable to withdraw, Kabarebe decided to push on towards Kinshasa.

But Angola wasn't the only country Kabila had managed to enlist the help of. Appealing directly to the countries that make up the Southern African Development Community – which the DRC was and is a member of – he'd also secured support from Namibia and, crucially, Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, whose military was one of the best equipped in the region. As Kabarebe advanced on the capital, he found that Zimbabwean Special Forces, complete with armour and air support, had bolstered the Congolese forces blocking his path. The "fifth column" never materialised either – popular support for Kabila had grown in the wake of the invasion, and Kinshasa's dark, electricity-starved streets were now lit up with the burning corpses of those suspected of collaboration. Kabarebe's mission was doomed.

The hounded Rwandan troops fought a desperate rearguard action up into Cabinda, the Angolan enclave north of the DRC. Here, they were eventually spat out of the fighting via a captured airfield. By Christmas 1998, after five months ▶

2001 2002 2005 2006 2011

JANUARY — Laurent Kabila is assassinated. Joseph Kabila succeeds his father as President.

JULY — The DRC and Rwanda sign a peace deal, under which Rwanda will withdraw its troops while the DRC will dismantle Hutu militias responsible for Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

DECEMBER — A peace deal is signed in South Africa between the Kinshasa government and Congolese rebel groups. A plan is put in place for a democratic transition.

MAY — A new constitution is agreed by former warring factions in the DRC.

JULY — The first free elections in four decades are held. With no clear winner, incumbent leader Joseph Kabila and opposition candidate Jean-Pierre Bemba contest a run-off poll in October.

NOVEMBER — Joseph Kabila is declared winner of the Presidential election, under the scrutiny of international monitors.

DECEMBER — Kabila is elected for a second term as President. The news is greeted with violence in Kinshasa and Mbuji-Mayi, where official tallies indicate that the strong majority voted for the opposition candidate.

A Congolese soldier carrying a rocket-launcher and a Kalashnikov rifle walks through the streets of Kinshasa

RWANDA REMEMBERS

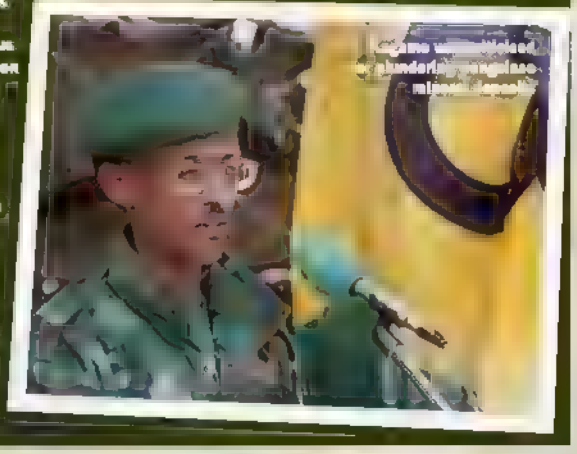
TODAY, RWANDA HAS TWO PUBLIC HOLIDAYS TO COMMEMORATE THE GENOCIDE THAT RAVAGED THE COUNTRY IN 1994 – GENOCIDE MEMORIAL DAY (7 APRIL) AND LIBERATION DAY (4 JULY).

PAUL KAGAME (1957-PRESENT)

Rwandan leader Paul Kagame's entire life has been overshadowed by the ethnic hatred between Hutus and Tutsis. These two distinct ethnic groups in east Central Africa got dumped inside the same colonial boundaries during the colonial carve-up in the 19th Century, with the "more regal-looking" Hutus ending up at the bottom of the social pile thanks to their racist rulers. When colonial rule came to an end in 1959, the Hutus took out their resentment over this on their Tutsi neighbours, and Kagame's Tutsi family, along with thousands of others, fled north to Uganda. Here, the former rich kid grew up in a refugee camp.

After graduating from university, the canny Kagame became Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's Chief of Intelligence, before forming the RPF, an exiled Tutsi army designed to retake Rwanda. Following further military training in the US, Kagame returned in 1990 to lead the insurrection against the Hutu government in Kigali. Then, when Hutus began the 1994 genocide, he led the RPF in the invasion of his homeland. Despite being outnumbered, by avoiding direct assaults, using prolonged artillery barrages and allowing the Hutus to concentrate their efforts on the genocide, he won the war in just three months. His tactics betrayed both the pragmatic side of his character, and his ruthless streak.

Much criticised for his interrole in Africa's Great War and the plundering of Congolese mineral deposits, Kagame is a man obsessed with stabilising Rwanda. He attempts this through strict control of the press, the opposition (critics frequently disappear or turn up dead) as well as the economy. He also talks down the importance of ethnicity, calling on all Rwandans to help transform the country from a land of subsistence farmers into a middle-income economy. For Kagame, making Rwanda a wealthier country is the key to saving it from future genocides.



of battle, Kabarebe returned to Kigali, with what was left of his badly mauled force. At its peak, his army had been around 15,000-strong. He made it out with less than 3,000 men.

After the Rwandan reversal at Kinshasa, the war became bogged down in a deadly stalemate in the east. The next two years were a muddled, bloody mish-mash of in-fighting and murder. The lines become so blurred, it was no longer clear who was fighting for whom, as roving militias constantly changed sides and ravaged the land. What is clear is that it was the civilian population who were made to suffer, as various warlords scrambled over each other for control of regions and resources.

The country became a killing field where the power-hungry deracinated communities with death squads, and used gang rape as a weapon. Break the women, and in front of their neighbours, their husbands, their children – so the ghastly logic went – and you'll break all resistance. What stories did make it out of this ghoulish netherworld are unrepeatable here. Congo, with its endless bounty, green rainforests, and sparkling, sun-lit lakes and rivers, was a paradise made pandemonium by the greed of man. One by one, thriving villages were replaced by filthy mines that tore up the earth. One by one, the surviving villagers were transformed into broken zombies who would work these mines, hacking out the minerals the West would pay top dollar for to make its weapons, its war machines and its mobile phones.

AT ITS PEAK, KABAREBE'S ARMY HAD BEEN 15,000-STRONG. HE MADE IT OUT WITH LESS THAN 3,000 MEN

Rwandan soldiers guard a truck of supplies, 1996

It seemed the whole country was being plundered. Zimbabwe grabbed diamond seams in the south. Angola joined the Congolese government in an oil venture in the west. Rwanda and Uganda (when they weren't squabbling over the spoils) ravaged the east of everything from minerals and timber to ivory. And always, it was the unarmed locals who paid the price. Ceasefire agreements were drawn up, only to be broken, while the insertion of the most expensive UN peacekeeping operation in history – over 5,500 troops were sent to the region in February 2000 alone – did little to stop the slaughter. Only another assassination could do that.

Shot four times

In January 2001, Kabila was in his inner sanctum, the Presidential Office in the Marble Palace, Kinshasa. He was wrestling over economic policy with an advisor when his bodyguard walked in. The 18-year-old, named Rashidi, was a former child soldier who'd served Kabila with unquestioning loyalty since he was 12. Kabila was the closest thing Rashidi had in this world to a father, but someone had obviously got to him. Approaching the President, he pulled his revolver out of his pocket and shot him four times. Rashidi was later killed while trying to escape, taking the truth behind the assassination with him. Rashidi's reasons for pulling the trigger are as mysterious as the identities of those who got to him. Was it the Rwandans? Was it their American backers? Was it Kabila's own people? We'll probably never know, but the fact remains that the dictator's murder broke the stalemate.

Kabila was replaced by his son, Joseph, and, almost immediately, Kabila Jnr endorsed a peace plan that his father had rejected. A ceasefire followed, policed with some success by the UN. Angola withdrew its troops, and Uganda pulled back. Rwanda, however, refused to budge. By now, it was occupying a chunk of the DRC 27 times bigger than its own country, on the pretext that it was hunting down the *génocidaires* still hiding there – despite reports that, in some cases,

Laurent Kabila's coffin is carried by Congolese officers, January 2001. His son Joseph (in black), appointed as heir to the Presidency, follows behind

those same *génocidaires* were employed in the mines there

Rwandan resistance, however, was crumbling, blighted by in-fighting, fatigue and mutiny. As the east descended further into chaos, the west under its new leader became increasingly stable. Foreign aid started to flow back into Kinshasa, and the economy eventually calmed down. Perhaps sensing the shift in power against him, Rwanda's leader, Paul Kagame, was persuaded to take a seat at the negotiating table

Rape victims

On 30 July 2002, in South Africa, Rwanda finally signed a peace deal with the DRC. In exchange for the withdrawal of the 20,000 or so Rwandan soldiers in the Kivu provinces, the Congolese promised to dismantle all Hutu militias serving there. Five months later, on 17 December, a further agreement was signed in Pretoria among the various Congolese factions. It promised to return the DRC to the democratic status it had been robbed of 42 years earlier with Patrice Lumumba's murder, with the assurance of elections within two years. With its signing, Africa's Great War was formerly declared over

As the ink dried on the documents, though, it was clear that nobody had won, while the cost of this avaricious madness had been horrific. An estimated 5.4 million people had lost their lives – civilians mostly who had been burned, starved, shot and driven from their lands.

Today, Congo is home to more than 200,000 rape victims, both male and female, from those darkest of times, while the country itself – rich enough still in resources to make it the greatest powerhouse on the African continent – is officially the poorest country on the planet. And while the war may have been officially over for 12 years, the crackle of gunfire still frequently silences the birdsong in the rainforests of the east. Rogue groups of bandits there still attack villages and each other, while unpunished *génocidaires* still lurk in its jungles. Then, of course, there are the children of Congo, many of whom witnessed all that killing, all that mutilation, all that rape. They are on the brink of adulthood now. Soon, it will be their turn to see if they can find a way through the grim shadows of the past.

JOSEPH KABILA (1971-PRESENT)

If his father, Laurent Kabila, was a product of the past, and Rwanda's leader, Paul Kagame, represents the present, then the DRC's current leader, Joseph Kabila, is perhaps a hint of Central Africa's future.

Born in a rebel camp in eastern Congo, and brought up in Tanzania witnessing his one-time revolutionary dad carve out a living as a crook, Kabila Jnr would appear to have had the ideal grounding in the Realpolitik of the region.

While following a military curriculum at university, he got to put his lessons into practice when his father called on him to help him overthrow Congo's dictator, Mobutu, in 1996. After the revolution, his father sent him to China to finish his education, and when he returned his father promoted him to Chief of the Armed Forces for the duration of Africa's Great War.

His experience of battle, combined with all that martial education, left Kabila Jnr with the understanding that the last thing his country needed was more war. When he reluctantly accepted the offer to become the DRC's leader after his father's assassination in January 2001, the first thing he did was endorse a ceasefire that his hardline father had rejected.

By the end of 2002, as the world's youngest head of state, he'd brokered a peace deal that stopped the war altogether, and set the DRC on course for its first democratic elections in over four decades. In 2006, he became the country's first legitimately elected leader since the murdered Patrice Lumumba, and he has since been re-elected.

Things are far from perfect in the DRC. Joseph Kabila inherited a country with a 120-year legacy of corruption, terror and grotesque exploitation. However, for the first time in its history, maybe – just maybe – the Democratic Republic of Congo finally has a man who can lead it into the light.

Kabila (left) with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 2001

A newspaper-seller in Kigali gives a thumbs-up as sales increase, with the population eager to read of the peace agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, 2002

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Starving internees at the Belsen concentration camp wait at the cookhouse gate for their rations of potato soup

Getty Images

Back to the past

SECRETS, LIES & SURVIVORS

Second World War: The worst conflict Europe has ever witnessed wasn't just fought on battlefields and across the skies. The Nazis also waged war on the continent's civilians. Nick Soldinger follows their trail of terror from Anne Frank's house to Auschwitz...

FIRST, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN the shouts of the SS men in the street below. Then the echo of their boots as they made their way up the stairs. And finally, the clang of their weapons as they tore their way into the secret hiding place... Standing in Anne Frank's House in Amsterdam, one can almost imagine the fateful morning in August 1943 when the Nazis came for the teenage diarist and her family. What's harder to grasp is the fear that the young girl must have felt as her worst nightmare, which she'd lived with for so long, suddenly and terrifyingly came true.

The house, essentially five claustrophobic rooms above a warehouse in central Amsterdam, is the first stop on a new historical tour entitled The Story of Anne Frank and Oskar Schindler, which traverses Europe exploring the Holocaust. It's a fitting place from which to begin a journey back into Europe's darkest hour, as it brings to life the story of Anne and her family in intimate detail. It reminds you that amongst that grainy newsreel footage of diseased corpses being bulldozed into ditches at Belsen, Buchenwald and Dachau, between all those bewilderingly big numbers you read about in history books, were real people. People like little Anne, whose 13-year-old face smiles at you from a photo on the wall as you enter the museum.

Vile crusade

Thirteen was how old Anne was when she and her family went into hiding on the premises. She'd already had an eventful childhood. Born in Frankfurt in 1929, she was just three when ▶

More than a million people were killed at Auschwitz

Hitler came to power. A year later, her father Otto relocated the family to Amsterdam, hoping to escape the escalating anti-Semitism in Germany.

By 1940, though, Hitler's vile crusade had caught them up, as his stormtroopers invaded the Netherlands. As the Nazis' grip tightened, "undesirables" – such as Anne's Jewish family – were targeted for extermination. There was no way out for Otto this time – the borders were blocked – so on 6 July 1942, he sneaked his family into a secret annexe behind his business premises in the city centre, to wait out the war. Here, they lived with a further four Jewish fugitives for the next two years in staggeringly testing conditions.

With the curtains constantly drawn, and no sound allowed during the day, it was a world starved of sunshine, conversation or stimulus. For a child – certainly one as vivacious as Anne – it should have been unbearable, and yet, despite the darkness, she somehow thrived. As she wrote in her famous diary, "I long to ride a bike, dance, whistle, look at the world, feel young and know that I'm free... [But] we're not allowed to look out of the window or go outside. Also, we have to do everything softly in case they hear us below... then I'm afraid we'll be discovered and shot."

The workers in the warehouse were apparently oblivious to the tragedy evolving above their heads, so quiet were the eight hidden inhabitants. During the day, a step was barely taken, words were only whispered and the toilet was never flushed. Indeed, the annexe

THE WORKERS IN THE WAREHOUSE WERE APPARENTLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE TRAGEDY EVOLVING ABOVE THEIR HEADS

was so well concealed, few even knew of its existence. Even fewer were aware that the only way in was through a secret doorway concealed behind a bookcase, at the top of a stairwell no employee had any reason to climb.

Somebody must have climbed it, though, or perhaps heard something, because on 4 August 1944 the annexe was raided by SS-led police, who found the eight terrified occupants exactly where the informant – who's never been identified – said they'd be. Anne had been only four years old when she'd left Germany. The Nazis now returned her, ten years older, in a crammed cattle train bound for Belsen.

Condemned to death

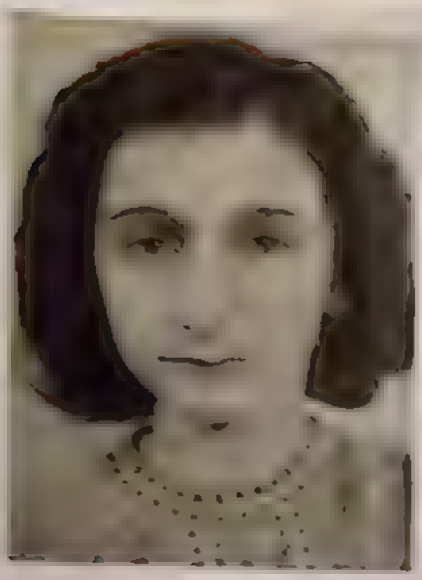
The site of the former concentration camp is where the tour lands next, just across the border into northern Germany. Preserved as a memorial, today Belsen is a haunted place where the birds still seem not to sing. A simple stone there remembers Anne and her sister Margot. They both died of typhus there in March 1945. Anne was not yet 16.

Berlin is the next stop, and a visit to the Wannsee Conference Centre. It was here that senior Nazis signed off The Final Solution in January 1942, condemning millions of innocents – including Anne – to death. It's an insightful link in the chain, as the tour's odyssey then heads into Poland itself, where so many of the "undesirables" swept up by the Nazis – Jews, Slavs, gypsies, gays – were dumped and then murdered. The tour ends up, like many of them, ▶

Getty Images

Anne Frank was sent to a concentration camp when she was just 14 years old

Anne's diary is on display at the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam



Ik begin met de foto
van Margot en Lutsig
Bret blijs eigen.
Dit is toch Januari
1942. Deze foto is
afschuwelijk, en ik
lijk er absoluut niet op.

Book of hope

Anne Frank's diary was a valuable companion to the young girl as she endured months of being holed up in a secret hideaway with no sunlight or conversation. It remains an inspiration to many people around the world.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, in Berlin

.n Auschwitz. The name of modern nightmares. The dark vortex that sucked in over a mill on ives, chewed them up in its gas ovens, then spat out their ashes like a malignant snow. But even here, in this story, we find a g mmer of hope

Not every Jew who passed through Auschwitz perished. Anne's father, Otto, surv ved and went on to publish his dead daughter's diar es, ensuring her story was never forgotten. There were others who also inspire, such as the Nazi factory owner Oskar Schindler, who saved 300 women from the camp's deadly riptide in 1944

Huge privileges

Thanks largely to the Steven Spielberg movie, Schindler's name is as ce ebrated today as Anne Frank's. His factory, "Emalia" – also on the itinerary – still stands in Krakow, 40 mi es east of Auschwitz. This one-time munitions plant s now a museum to Schindler and his legacy, although when the 31 year-old entrepreneur acquired it just after the German invasion of September 1939, not even he could have guessed that it would eventually transform him from scoundrel to saviour.

As a member of the Nazi party – albeit an opportunistic one – Schind er was entitled to huge privileges in the new y occup ed lands, and he knew it. He also knew that it could make him rich, and within weeks of arriving as Emalia's

A CLERICAL ERROR LED TO 300 OF HIS FEMALE WORKERS BEING SENT TO AUSCHWITZ INSTEAD OF BRÜNNLITZ

new owner, he had won huge contracts to supply the Wehrmacht with cookware and, crucially, expanded its manufacturing output to include munitions. Schindler soon reduced his labour costs, too, by replacing Polish workers with cheaper ones from the local Jewish ghetto

His new workforce was good. So good, in fact, that when, in March 1943, the Nazis liquidated the ghetto and marched its Jews off to the death camps, Schindler's stayed behind. Schindler had struck a deal to keep them, converting his factory into its very own concentration camp, complete with barbed-wire fences and watchtowers. It was, however, a ruse

On the outside, Emalia looked like any other respectable Nazi *arbeitslager*. On the ins de, though, "inmates" were treated with respect and often given double rations, rather than be beaten or starved to death. Schindler may have started out a *bon viveur* Nazi of convenience who hoped to get rich quick, but the horrors he witnessed during the liquidation of Krakow's ghetto transformed him into one of history's bravest humanitarians.

His greatest play was yet to come, though. In July 1944, with the Soviets approaching, the Naz s ordered easternmost concentration camps such as Ema ia to close and send their prisoners to Auschwitz. Schindler bluffed aga n, arguing that his camp made weapons that were v tal to the war effort. He persuaded offic als to move his camp, with its "specia sed" workforce, to Brünnlitz, Czechos ovakia. When officials asked for a list of who was on his workforce, Schindler supp ed one – w th 1,200 names on it. The rest, as they say, is history. Apart from one last twist. A clerical error led to 300 of his fema e workers being sent to Auschwitz instead of Brünnlitz, and it took Schindler a month and most of what was left of his personal fortune to get them out. It's thought that, in today's money, Schindler – who ended the war penniless – spent £8mil on saving his workers. Not that a price can rea y be put on what he achieved.

An estimated 20 million non-combatants weren't as fortunate as Schindler's 1,200. As the Naz s' terror campaign spread, they gassed, hanged or shot other "undesirables" w th impunity – a though justice would eventually be served at the Nuremberg courthouse, southern Germany, where the tour concludes

Oskar Schindler claimed it took a "miracle" to do what he d d. It didn't. It took courage; courage to res st – the same courage the Frank family displayed by not giving in. That's the esson this tour teaches, and the reason why the names Anne Frank and Oskar Schindler beam a message of hope throughout history.

The Story of Anne Frank and Oskar Schindler tour

Price from £1,029 per person. Includes: 11 nights' accommodation with continental breakfast; travel door-to-door by Silver Service luxury coach from a convenient local joining point; and historical visits as described, with assistance from one of Leger's specialist guides.

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Oskar Schindler

Getty Images

Schindler's factory in Krakow, where he saved the lives of hundreds of Jews

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It took 11 years to erect and cost the Canadian government 1.5 million Canadian dollars, but the Vimy Ridge monument is a truly impressive tribute to those who died during WWI

PA Photos

STANDING for the fallen

First World War: The Battle of Vimy Ridge has proven significant on many levels: it formed a vital aspect of the 1917 Battle of Arras, its battlefield now houses one of the world's most impressive war monuments, and, as Paul Pettengale discovers, it helped forge a nation

BACKSTORY
It's 1917 and the war in France rages. In Arras, near to Calais, the British are digging tunnels under German enemy lines in preparation for the climactic Battle of Arras, and to the north the Canadians are tasked with conquering the imposing Vimy Ridge.

APPROACHING FROM A DISTANCE, you're easily fooled into thinking that one of Canada's greatest monuments to its fallen is a relatively small construction, such is the vastness of the surrounding topography and the distant horizon that it presents.

Looking across miles and miles of landscape of north-western France, the sheer scale of the two-pillared edifice only becomes apparent as you approach through the meticulously maintained grassed areas enveloping it.

The twin pylons stand 30 metres (120 feet) from the base of the memorial steps. It doesn't sound a lot until you experience the dizzying effect of standing at the foot of one of the limestone pillars and looking straight up at the figures carved into its summit. The monument's stature is emphasised by its position on the top of Hill 145, the highest point of Vimy, itself positioned 145 metres (hence the name) above sea level on the 14 kilometre (nine mile) long ridge.

Vimy Ridge fell to the Germans in October 1914 during the Race to the Sea, where French and British forces competed with the Germans to outflank each other throughout northern France at the beginning of the Great War. The French tried to recapture the ridge on several occasions – notably during the Second and Third Battles of Artois in May and September 1915 – and although losing around 150,000 men in the attempt, they failed to achieve success.

The French Tenth Army withdrew from the Arras area in February 1916 in order to intensify their efforts against the Germans in Verdun. They were relieved by the British XVII Corps, and so followed a cat-and-mouse series of battles that employed mining and tunnelling, plus heavy shelling between the opposing forces. However, Vimy Ridge remained under German control.

Vimy Ridge fell to the Germans during the Race to the Sea, where the French and British competed with the Germans to outflank each other

Strategic Importance

The Battle of Vimy Ridge took place from 9-12 April 1917. The offensive, conducted by the Canadian Corps against the Germans, was part of the Battle of Arras in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France. Vimy Ridge was considered to have immense strategic importance because it presents clear views across the Douai Plains below. Hold the ridge and you could see what was going on for tens of kilometres all around you.

Battle of Arras

During May 1916, the Canadian Corps assumed responsibility for operations in the Vimy Ridge sector, though under the command of British Lieutenant General Sir Julian Byng. Months of planning followed, during which the British First Army headquarters presented Byng with the task of commanding the Canadian Corps, supported by British Fifth Infantry Division, and British engineers and artillery; their aim was to take Vimy Ridge during the broader Battle of Arras that was to commence in April 1917.

The tactical plan was a significant factor in the success of the subsequent attack. The ▶

GOING UNDERGROUND
TWENTY-FIVE KILOMETRES OF TUNNELS WERE DUG UNDER ARRAS IN PREPARATION FOR THE ATTACK ON THE GERMANS, AT A RATE OF 80 METRES A DAY, BY JUST 580 KIWI AND BRITISH MEN

The Vimy Ridge battleground today, featuring bomb and blast craters (and unexploded shells)

Vimy Ridge in 1917; utterly unrecognisable from the photo to the left

Canadian Corps and their British allies were to attack four coloured objective lines, leapfrogging each other as they progressed through German-held territory. Snatch-and-grab tactics were to be employed, supported by artillery bombardment of German strongholds, and the British-devised plan of digging tunnels under German lines and using explosives to kill from below, creating massive craters as a consequence.

But the Germans knew that the attack was coming. A combination of intelligence gathered around the Arras area and information handed over by a Canadian soldier who had defected to the Germans meant that the aggressors had a chance to plan a defence in Vimy. Unfortunately, the tactics they would usually employ – whereby an initial strong frontline defence would take the brunt of the attack against them before falling back and regrouping – were flawed when it came to defending Vimy: the ridge was too narrow, being just 700 metres wide in part, and heavily sloped on the eastern side. The Germans' solution was to launch a pre-emptive attack against the Canadian troops, intended to capture the nearby Zouave Valley at the northern point of the Canadian front. However, this offensive failed due to heavy artillery action on the part of the Canadians, and left the Germans weakened

Sleet and snow

On 9 April 1917, the struggle for Vimy Ridge commenced. A joint Canadian and British force of some 170,000 men marched into battle against German forces consisting of the 16th Bavarian Infantry Division, the 79th Reserve Division and the First Bavarian Reserve Division.

Four attacking divisions under the command of Byng were to fight sleet and snow as well as their human counterparts, as they pushed forward at 5.30am on Easter Monday, a day later than planned due to a request from the French not to commence battle on the religious holiday.

The attack was supported by an immense barrage of artillery bombardment that utilised every single gun available to the joint Canadian and British Forces. Mine charges were then detonated under no man's land and under German forward-defence lines. And in less than an hour, the First, Second and Third Canadian Divisions reported that they'd captured the Black Line – the first of the four line objectives. The Fourth Division encountered greater German defences, though achieved the Black Line a few hours later. The Green Line was soon to follow.

The attack continued, forcing the Germans back, despite the deployment of their 79th Reserve Division. The Germans rallied during the evening, securing the third (Red) line, and, at the end of the day, were satisfied that the worst of the Canadian offensive was over

It most certainly wasn't.

On 9 April 1917, the struggle for Vimy Ridge commenced. A joint Canadian and British force of some 170,000 men marched into battle

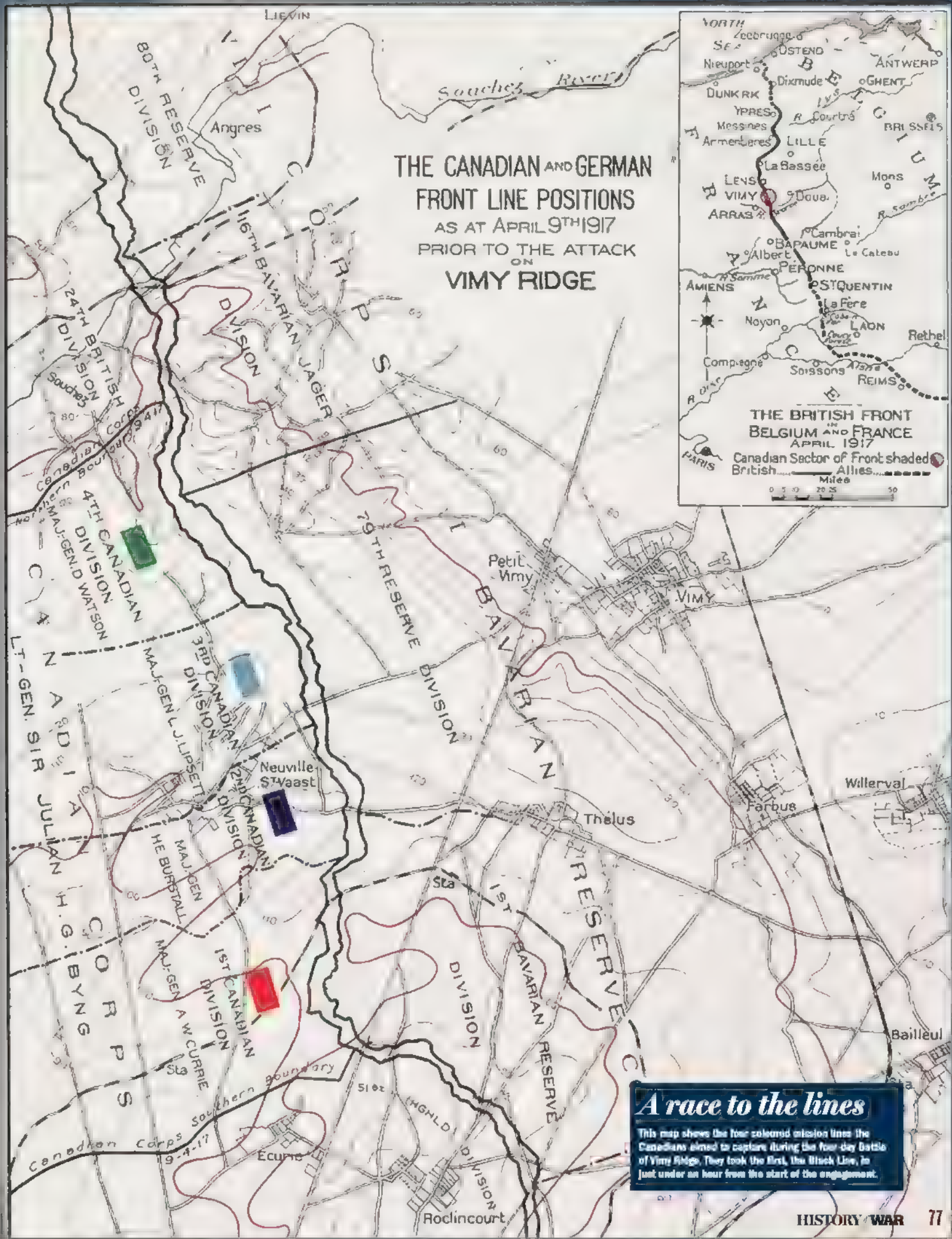
At 9.30am the following morning, the British ordered three reserve brigades to the Red Line to add the Canadian First and Second Divisions. The fresh legs and minds benefited the subsequent onslaught. The leapfrogging tactic was again used to advance through the German-held fields and villages, and just an hour and a half later, the Allied forces had managed to push through to capture the fourth (Blue) line. However, Hill 145, the highest point of Vimy Ridge, remained under German control

Not for long, it transpired. The Germans were evacuating at a pace and by the arrival of nightfall on 10 April 1917, Vimy Ridge was all but taken. Only the very pinnacle of the ridge, called the Pimple, remained – and remain it would for a further two days of fighting.

During 11 April, the Pimple, which was being guarded by the 16th Bavarian Infantry

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial site features original (though rebuilt) trenches. This one belonged to the Germans

A German gun emplacement mounted just yards from what was the Canadian front



A race to the lines

This map shows the four coloured mission lines the Canadians aimed to capture during the four-day Battle of Vimy Ridge. They took the first, the Black Line, in just under an hour from the start of the engagement.

Division, reinforced by the Fourth Guards Infantry Division, was subjected to constant bombardment and sustained gas attacks initiated by the Royal Engineers. The following day, the Canadians pressed on. Although initially held back by German small-arms fire, they eventually succeeded in taking the whole of Vimy Ridge. By the end of the day, 12 April, the Canadians, supported by their British allies, had succeeded in their overall objective.

Fallen soldiers

In all, 10,606 Canadian soldiers had fallen during the battle, either killed (3,598) or seriously injured. Total German casualties are unknown, though over 4,000 were captured as a consequence of the action. In the context of the Great War, the Battle of Vimy Ridge was a relatively small aspect of the campaign conducted by the Canadian Corps. Of the 418,052 Canadian soldiers who fought in World War One, 56,638 were to lose their lives. So the Vimy Ridge offensive accounted for less than ten per cent of Canada's war dead.

Yet the Battle of Vimy Ridge had significant, far-reaching consequences for Canada as a nation, for it was the first time in the history of the country that all four divisions of its Corps had fought together, albeit under the command of a British Lieutenant General. Byng was succeeded by Canada's first-ever commander in the summer of 1917, when General Sir Arthur Currie assumed command of the First Division. Currie later described the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge as "the grandest day the Corps ever had".

But it was the impact on the Canadian national psyche for which Vimy Ridge will be remembered. The battle has come to signify the unity of the nation; of solidarity and national identity. No wonder, then, that when the French offered land to Canada to construct its First World War memorials, the Canadians ultimately chose the site at Vimy Ridge on which to build the largest Canadian monument outside of the country.

One of 20 statues on the monument, this one represents a mother's grief at the loss of a son

The Canadian Battlefields Memorial Committee, which was established in 1920, commissioned the Canadian government to administer a competition to design a memorial, which would be erected on eight sites across Belgium and France, the land for which had been donated by those countries.

The winning design was by Walter Seymour Allward, a sculptor from Toronto. A total of 160 submissions had been received, and the 17 shortlisted possibilities had been created in plaster for the Committee's consideration. What impressed the Committee members was that Allward's design incorporated two towers rather than the single tower the other submissions featured; one tower was to represent Canada and the other France, in recognition of the sacrifice each of the countries had made in fighting the war. However, due to the size and complexity of Allward's proposed monument, it was decided that his twin towers would be built in just one of the memorial sites, and that the design of the runner-up, architect Frederick Chapman Clemesha, would be erected at all the others. (Clemesha was actually from Preston, but moved to Canada in 1901.)

Discussion then began as to which of the memorial sites should feature Allward's design. General Currie favoured the Mount Sorrel site in Ypres, but after some time it was decided that the most fitting site would be where the four Canadian Corps fought, united together for the first time, at Vimy Ridge.

Herculean task

The construction of the memorial was a herculean task. The precise location was to be Hill 145, the highest point of the ridge, so transporting materials there was a job in itself, especially considering that the foundations alone contain over 11,000 tonnes of concrete and reinforced steel. Literally on top of that sits 6,000 tonnes of limestone from a quarry in Seget in modern-day Croatia, which was mined for the towers (or pylons), and the 20 sculpted figures that adorn the structure.

The project took 11 years to complete from inception to finalised construction, with the first stone arriving for the building of the pylons in 1927. The stone for the statues would not arrive until 1931, at which point sculptors began

An entrance to one of the tunnels dug by the Canadians under the German lines

Over 11,000 tonnes of concrete and steel, and 6,000 tonnes of limestone were used in the monument's construction

the job of carving them, housed in makeshift, canvas-covered studios at the Vimy Ridge site. The project would eventually cost the Canadian government 1.5 million Canadian Dollars.

The monument features 20 figures in total: eight figures at the top of the pylons, representing The Chorus; two figures of a dying soldier passing a torch to a comrade as the Spirit of Sacrifice; two groups, totalling seven figures, at the base of the monument acting as The Defenders; The Mourning Parents, representing the mothers and fathers of Canada's war dead; and Mother Canada, who bows her head down towards a stone sarcophagus.

High up on one of the pylons sits a carved maple leaf, and on the other a fleur-de-lys, representing Canada and France respectively. Furthermore, all around the wall of the monument are carved the names of the 11,285 Canadian soldiers who lost their lives but whose bodies have never been found or identified.

On 26 July 1936, the monument was unveiled with a dedication ceremony attended by a staggering 100,000 people, including over 8,000 veterans who had made the pilgrimage from Canada. It was unveiled by King Edward VIII, as the King of Canada – while still a Prince – had served on the staff of the Canadian Corps in France during World War One.

One tower was to represent Canada and the other France, in recognition of the sacrifice each of the countries had made in fighting the war

As well as providing land for the monument itself, the French authorities agreed to grant space for the construction of the National Historic Site of Canada, which comprises a large visitors centre, reconstructed trenches (built on the original trench sites), a section of the underground tunnels on the ridge, and the opportunity to view the immense craters that were formed during the fighting.

The view from the monument takes in the largest slag-heaps in Europe, situated in Pas-de-Calais

Failing foundations

Regrettably, Allward's vision to create a monument that would last many hundreds of years did not reach fruition, for after 60 years the way in which the limestone was bonded to the concrete foundations started to fail. Water damage eroded the concrete where it came into contact with the limestone, and a vast restoration project was needed.

This was embarked upon in 2001 and took five years to complete, at a cost of 20 million Canadian Dollars. On 9 April 2007, the Vimy Ridge memorial monument was re-dedicated at a ceremony fronted by Queen Elizabeth II and attended by Prince Philip, the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, together with thousands of visitors. The ceremony took place on the 90th anniversary of the start of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Visiting the Canadian National Vimy Memorial site

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial site is a relatively short drive from the city of Arras in north-west France. By car, take the N17 north of Arras and then pick up the E15/A26 towards Aix-Noulette. Turn left onto the D55, which will take you directly to the Memorial Park (just follow the road signs).

The site is closed from mid-December through to mid-January, but is open for the rest of the year from 9am until 5pm. Guided tours are available from February until the end of November, though not on Mondays.

Phone +33 3 21 50 68 68

Email vimy.memorial@vac-acc.gc.ca

***History of War* visited the Canadian National Vimy Memorial courtesy of the Pas-de-Calais Tourist Agency (www.visit-pas-de-calais.com) and P&O Ferries (www.poferries.com).**

Military MILESTONES

BODY ARMOUR

In warfare, protecting yourself is every bit as important as inflicting damage on the enemy. Steve Jarratt traces the progression of body armour **from the Assyrians through the Romans to the 21st Century…**

1700BC LAMELLAR ARMOUR

One of the oldest forms of personal protection, lamellar armour was made from hundreds of small, rectangular iron, bronze or hardened-leather plates, or "lamellae". These were laced together to form tough yet flexible armour, with varieties including Brigandine, Scale, Splint and Ring. Egyptian bas-reliefs from 1700BC depict soldiers wearing a form of lamellar armour, although the only physical examples date back to the Assyrians between 900 and 600BC. The Asian form of the armour was first developed in China around 300BC, before spreading to Japan, and often used leather plates that were hardened by boiling or lacquering (the First Emperor's terracotta army can be seen wearing lamellar tunics and helmets). Lamellar armour was later used by races all across Asia, including the Mongols, Rus and Turks, and remained in use until the 16th Century.

500BC CHAINMAIL

Chainmail is the weaving together of rings to form a flexible metal fabric, which is worn over a padded vest. One shirt of chainmail consists of between 10,000 and 50,000 rings. It is believed that chainmail was developed by the Celts, as rusty examples have been found in Celtic graves in Romania dating back to 400BC. The earliest depiction of a soldier wearing chainmail armour is that of a Persian warrior of 359BC, however examples of bronze chainmail date as far back as the Etruscans over 3,000 years ago. Chainmail was developed in different regions and is distinguishable by its ring pattern, which identifies its source as western Europe, Italy, Japan or Persia. In around 200BC, the Romans – having been defeated by the Gauls – began to adopt European-pattern mail shirts, known to historians as *lorica hamata*. Chainmail went out of favour with the rise of plate mail, but can still be seen in use today in activities such as butchery and shark-diving.

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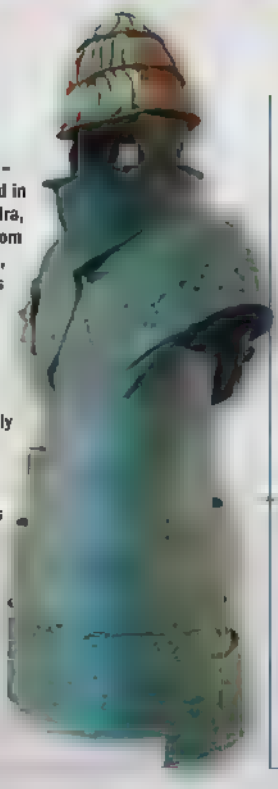
2000BC | 1500 | 1000 | 500 | 0 | 100AD | 200 | 300 | 400 | 500 | 600 | 700 | 800

1400BC THE DENDRA PANOPLY

The oldest-known example of full-body bronze armour – or "panoply" – is that found in 1960 in the village of Dendra, southern Greece. Dating from the late Mycenaean period, the bronze armour consists of a two-piece cuirass with hinged plates, three-piece shoulder guards termed pauldrons, and a large collar or gorget. The components are of relatively simple construction with no major shaping, except around the arms, and are bound together with pieces of cord and lined with leather. The helmet is made of multiple slices of boar tusk stitched to a leather cap and finished off with bronze cheek guards. The bulk and weight of the armour suggest that it was worn by an archer charioteer.



700BC GREEK HOPLITE ARMOUR

Greek infantrymen, or Hoplites, were named after the round shield they bore, the "hoplon". Their armour – which was paid for by each individual – consisted of the Corinthian helmet, greaves or shin armour, a breastplate and a backplate, and was very expensive. There's little naturally occurring tin or copper in Greece, so all the raw materials had to be imported, and the armour itself was complex to make, needing to be hand-beaten from a single sheet of bronze and "raised" to create deeply concave forms. Hoplite armour was poorly designed for close combat: the helmet was uncomfortable and restricted vision and hearing, while the "bell corselet" thorax limited movement and was heavy. This resulted in severe perspiration, leading the wearer to become dehydrated.

100BC IMPERIAL ROMAN ARMOUR

Gaius Marius' introduction of a standing professional army led to the creation, in 30BC, of a standardised uniform, which needed to be practical, simple to mass-produce and easily repairable. The armour was variously of lamellar, scale or chainmail design. During the time of the Roman Republic, soldiers wore the *lorica squamata* – scale armour made of small iron or bronze plates sewn into a fabric shirt. In the early Roman Empire, the *lorica hamata* chainmail was introduced, adopted from Celtic designs. The more familiar *lorica segmentata* was introduced around 100AD, and featured a series of horizontal plates around the torso, with segmented shoulder guards, held together with leather straps.

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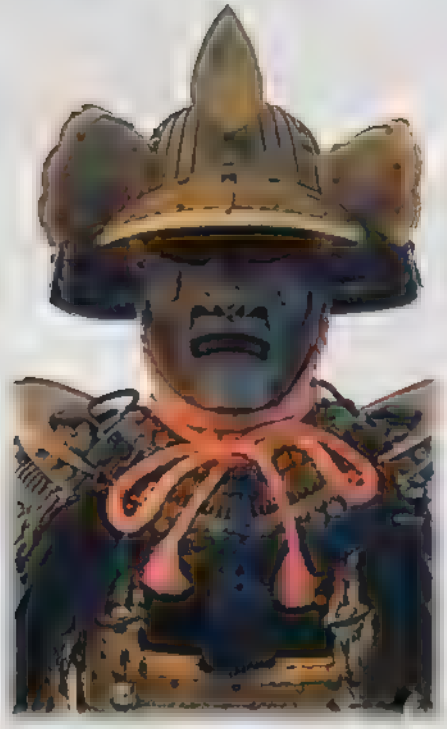
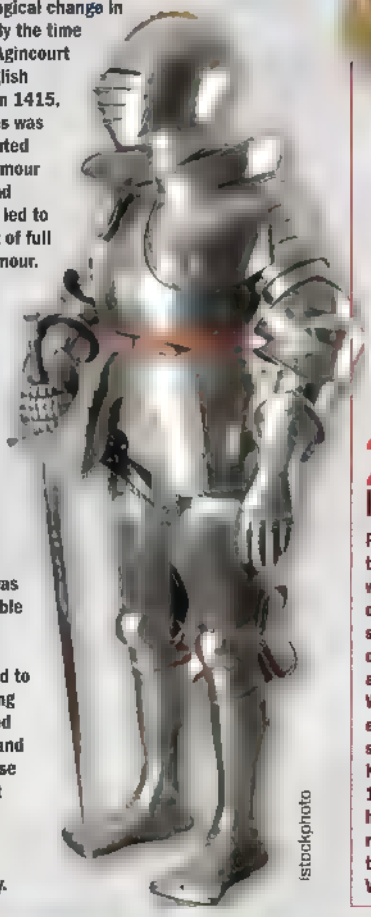


8TH CENTURY
JAPANESE SAMURAI ARMOUR

The armour used by Japanese samurai came into being in the late 700s. Early versions were of lamellar construction using individual scales called *kozane*, which were connected by leather or silk to form the cuirass or *dou*. The plates were either made of toughened, lacquered leather (*nerigawa*), or iron (*tetsu*). A full suit consisted of many components, including the cuirass and helmet, shoulder and forearm guards, thigh and shin guards, a neck guard, and the signature panels at the front and back called *kusazuri*, which protected the lower body and upper leg. A fearsome-looking facemask, or *mengu*, was tied to the helmet.

14TH CENTURY
PLATE ARMOUR

The advent of the longbow inspired another technological change in armour design. By the time of the Battle of Agincourt between the English and the French in 1415, the coat of plates was being supplemented by articulated armour over the arms and legs. This in turn led to the development of full suits of plate armour. The use of case-hardening (or "carburising") by Milanese armourers also provided metal that was harder and tougher. For the next 200 years, anyone in possession of a suit of good-quality armour was almost invulnerable to the weapons of the day. Plate armour continued to develop, becoming ever more stylised and decorative, and its widespread use was only brought to an end by the introduction of the musket in the 16th Century.



istockphoto

2007
IMPROVED OUTER TACTICAL VEST

Following the First World War, different materials were trialled in an attempt to gain maximum protection with minimum weight, but these still largely consisted of steel plates. However, with the invention of the synthetic fibre Kevlar in 1965 by Stephanie Kwolek of DuPont (who passed away in June of this year), armourers had a new material with which to work. Woven Kevlar is five times stronger than steel of an equal weight, and provides lightweight protection from shrapnel and bullets. The US Army began issuing its Kevlar-reinforced PASGT vest and helmet combo in the 1980s. Since then, a number of different materials have been developed that are both lighter and more resistant than Kevlar. The standard body armour of today's US military is the Improved Outer Tactical Vest, which features hard ceramic plate inserts.

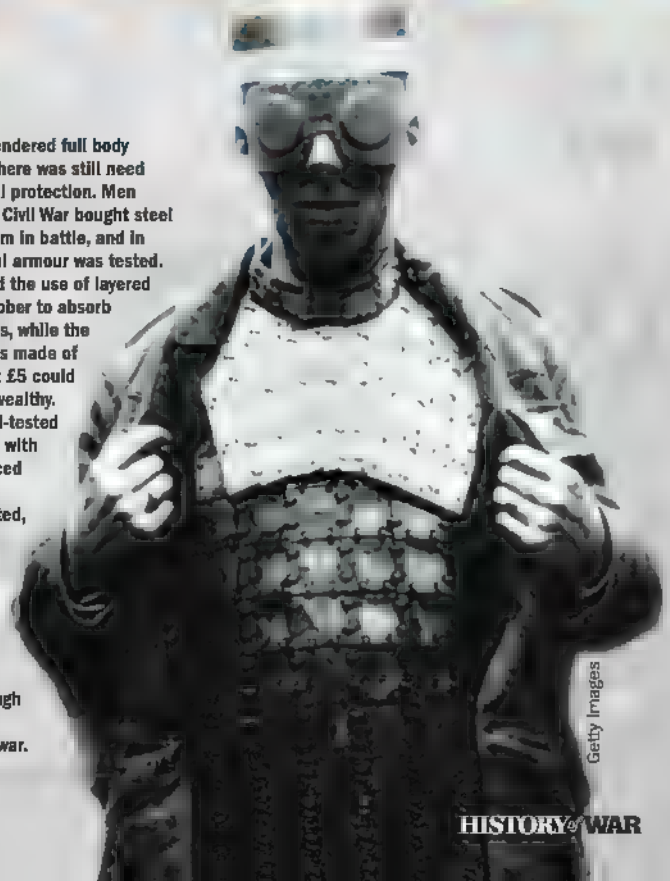
900 1000 1100 1200 1300 1400 1500 1600 1700 1800 1900 2000 2100

12TH CENTURY
BRIGANDINE ARMOUR

Probably due to the extra protection required during a joust, the next major revolution in armour took place during the 12th Century, with the advent of the coat of plates, also known as the jack of plates. Basically, this involved sewing or riveting overlapping iron plates into a cloth or leather jerkin – the medieval equivalent of a bulletproof vest – which was typically worn beneath a hauberk, or shirt of mail. The number of plates used varied from a handful to hundreds – remnants from the Battle of Visby (1361) number as many as 600. This design evolved into the Brigandine, which resembled a traditional doublet, though it was often sleeveless, and had plates riveted in between two layers of cloth. This type of armoured garment was introduced during the transitional phase, prior to the introduction of full plate armour.

1914-18
WWI BODY ARMOUR

The arrival of firearms rendered full body armour redundant, but there was still need for some sort of personal protection. Men fighting in the American Civil War bought steel vests to help protect them in battle, and in WWI a variety of personal armour was tested. New techniques included the use of layered material like silk and rubber to absorb the impact of rifle rounds, while the Chemico Body Shield was made of kapok and resin – but at £5 could only be afforded by the wealthy. The major forces all field-tested body armour: the British with a fabric corselet reinforced with metal plates; the Germans with a segmented, lobster-like body guard; and the Americans with Bashford Dean's panoply, a metal suit cushioned with vulcanised sponge rubber. Sadly, none of these were issued in enough numbers to prevent the horrific casualties of the war.



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FOR VALOUR
Unsung heroes

MAURICE "MOGGY" MAYNE

Shot down in 1942, RAF gunner Sergeant Maurice "Moggy" Mayne was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Poland. The spirited Londoner had no intention of staying there long, though, and two years later broke out. Nick Soldinger traces his daring and deadly journey through the heart of the Nazi empire, as he sought to escape

A BRIGHT SPRING DAY, JUST BEFORE Easter Sunday 1944. The sky over Berlin was brilliant blue and cloud-free. The war that had been raging for almost five years and had transformed Londoner Maurice "Moggy" Mayne's home city to a place of blackouts and shattered brickwork seemed not to have touched the German capital. As he wandered along its elegant boulevards, where huge swastika flags adorned the buildings or fluttered from their rooftops, he marvelled at the splendour and tranquillity of this Nazi hub.

Dressed in a cannibalised mix of military uniforms, cut and dyed to look like the attire of a civilian electrician, 23-year-old Moggy had only that morning broken out of a prisoner-of-war camp in German-occupied Poland, 250 miles to the east. Now, after a five-hour train journey, he found himself at the heart of Hitler's Germany, at the height of the Führer's sadistic reign. The streets may have been busy with smartly dressed civilians, but among them strode black-uniform-clad SS men, their sinister Totenkopf cap badges flashing in the sunlight. There was no doubt that the nightmarish Gestapo, Heinrich Himmler's dreaded secret police, were silently watching from the shadows, too, looking for anything or anyone that didn't fit in.

Moggy, self-conscious in the extreme, deliberately ambled along Berlin's avenues. He knew that even his walk might give him away. He'd been in the RAF since 1940 and, like most servicemen, usually strode with a hint of parade-ground swagger. So today, he shuffled along with rounded shoulders, his hands stuffed in his pockets as he headed northwards through the city, hoping that he might soon see a sign that would point him in the direction of Berlin's Hauptbahnhof station. From there, he intended to catch a train to the port of Stralsund, some 160 miles to the north. Moggy's plan was to get to neutral Sweden by boat, then get back into the war.

But he'd been wandering for hours, not knowing if he was even heading the right way. He would have to ask a local for directions.

Moggy had boxed all through childhood and, as a smaller man, knew that when your opponent's reach is greater than yours, you need to move inside, to get closer to your adversary in order to survive. It was this logic that had brought him to Berlin in the first place, as it was the last place the Gestapo would look for a prisoner of war. And it was time to gamble on that same boxer's tactic again. He needed to ask someone who would definitely know the answer; ideally, someone who was used to giving strangers directions.

The person he chose was someone who ticked those boxes but was, perhaps, the last person a POW on the run should approach for a chat. Spying a burly cop directing traffic in the middle of the street, Moggy walked up to him and, in his best schoolboy German, asked, "Bitte, Herr Offizier, wo ist der bahnhof zum norden?" (Please, Officer, where is the train station that will take me north?).

It was a boxer's gamble – and a hell of a risk. The policeman stopped what he was doing. He turned, looked down at the slender, fair-haired lad with the strange accent. Then he grabbed him with both hands...

Intense attack

Maurice Mayne – or "Moggy", as he'd been known since his schooldays – was born in Deptford in South East London in 1920. It was a rough neighbourhood, and his dad, a veteran of the First World War, had survived going over the top on the first day of the Somme, among other things. Mr Mayne Snr knew what it took to survive in a tough world, and the boxing that was to be such a big part of Moggy's childhood was one way he would pass that knowledge on to his son.

Boxing was also what led Moggy to become an RAF air gunner when he joined up in 1940. Then 19 years old, he had initially gone to the recruiting station because he fancied himself in one those dapper blue RAF uniforms, after spotting a chap bowling through his neighbourhood in one. As for what job he could do for the RAF in return, Moggy wasn't quite sure. When asked at his interview, he'd not unreasonably replied "pilot", but the panel had collectively shaken its head. There weren't enough places. Then, when Moggy was asked about his hobbies and his love of boxing came up, his fate was sealed. "I suppose they thought a gunner had to be a tough, aggressive type," he wrote years later in his memoir, *Down But Not Out*. "The dream of being a pilot was over, but at least I was going to be flying. I'd get to see more than my fair share of danger, too!"

After training, Moggy was assigned to 217 Squadron, a coastal command unit initially operating out of St Eval in Cornwall. He was to be a turret gunner on a Bristol Beaufort, an aircraft used primarily as a torpedo plane to attack enemy shipping. It was in this role that Moggy first got to fire his gun in anger, when his squadron was sent to attack the German battleship Scharnhorst as it made for the North Sea from Brest, in the so-called "Channel Dash". Moggy was used to fighting opponents who were bigger than him, but even he knew that a plane against a battleship was pushing the odds. The attack on 12 February 1942 proved so intense that, although the Beaufort's crew survived, its pilot suffered a breakdown and had to be replaced.

Superstitions are rife in wartime, and in the RAF in the 1940s, it was believed to be bad luck to switch crews. Not long after the attack on Scharnhorst, the crew of Moggy's plane, with a new pilot installed, could've been forgiven for thinking that there might be some sense in such nonsense.

The squadron was relocated to the Shetland Islands, from where it was to conduct sorties against German shipping in the Baltic Sea. On 1 April 1942, Moggy's plane set off to attack a convoy off the coast

The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin during a military review, 1939. As Moggy discovered, the German capital was an intimidating place for prisoners on the run

Getty Images

of Norway. At around 5pm off Stavanger Fjord, the German ships were spotted and Moggy's plane began its dive towards the flotilla. As it came through the clouds, the sailors manning the anti-aircraft guns on the decks opened up, filling the sky with shell bursts. The cockpit of Moggy's plane was ripped apart by a direct hit, killing the pilot instantly. Moments later, the plane smashed into the icy Baltic

Badly wounded

With a serious head injury, Moggy struggled to escape the wreckage, gasping for air, thrashing about in the freezing waters and growing more numb by the second. Unconsciousness began to close in, but the sight of the crew's radio operator succumbing to the cold and drowning spurred him on. Moggy fought his way out of the sinking wreck and scrambled onto the plane's dinghy, along with its badly wounded navigator. He was alive, but only just. Within minutes, the pair were picked up by the Germans and taken to the mainland. Moggy would spend the next two years in captivity.

After a week in Norway, Moggy was flown to Germany, to the Luftwaffe's interrogation centre in Oberwesel. After ten days of questioning, he was sent to the notorious Stalag VIII-B, a POW camp near Lamsdorf in Upper Silesia, deep inside Nazi-occupied Poland

The camp was huge. More than 100,000 British and Allied troops would pass through it during the course of the war. Prisoners were divided by nationality, with each country occupying a separate district, from where they were organised into work parties

The only exception to this was RAF personnel Perhaps because air crews were perceived as more valuable to a war effort, or perhaps – as Moggy insisted – because they were more inclined to escape, the RAF men were incarcerated in what amounted to the camp's high security wing, complete with extra barbed

AS MOGGY'S PLANE CAME THROUGH THE CLOUDS, THE SAILORS MANNING THE GUNS ON THE DECKS OPENED UP

wire fencing. As they weren't permitted off the base, the RAF POWs were also unable to work in the forests or quarries around the camp. Instead, they spent long days behind the wire, being counted and constantly scrutinised

The camp had been hosting Allied prisoners since the start of the war. It had originally been built during World War One and had simply been dusted off when hostilities broke out again – just in time to greet many of the 40,000 Brits left behind after the fall of Dunkirk. In the intervening two years, those prisoners had set up a pretty good system of bartering for goods, gaining information and acquiring anything from the guards or the local population that might be deemed useful in an escape attempt. That said, whatever resources were scrounged were incredibly precious, and any attempt over or under the wire first had to be approved by the Escape Committee, who had complete control over everything from document forging to tailoring.

Within days of arriving at Stalag VIII-B, Moggy approached the Escape Committee to tell them he wanted to bust out. They told him he wasn't the only one. Freedom, like everything else in 1940s Europe, was rationed. If he wanted it, he'd have to join the queue. So Moggy took his place at the back of what turned out to be a very long line.

Not that he got downbeat, instead using his time positively to prepare. Moggy had studied German at school, and now worked hard to reacquaint himself with the language, studying the signs all around him and chatting to the guards, who were as bored as he was by the daily grind of prison life in rural Poland.

Moggy realised that his best chance of escape would be to get into one of the work parties that the Germans allowed into the nearby countryside for tree-felling or stone-cutting. But how? As an RAF inmate, he was ▶

Moggy served as a turret gunner aboard a Bristol Beaufort plane like this one, before being shot down and captured

Getty Images

forbidden from joining one, prevented even from gaining access to the d stricts of the camp where they departed from. He was effectively trapped ins de a camp within a camp. To make matters worse, the RAF personne also found themselves targeted for reprisals for the Allied bombing of Germany, as well as other actions conducted m les away from where Moggy and his mates sat in their miserable huts The failed D eppe Raid was a point in case.

Heavy German fire

On 19 August 1942, a s zeable force of most y Canadian commandos had attacked the French port of Dieppe. The objective had been to temporar y seize the harbour, gather inte ligence and then withdraw. It was a probe, essentia ly, for what would evolve into the D-Day land ngs two years later. It was a so a comp ete d saster. Support for the raid was inadequate and, after ten hours of being pinned down on the beach by heavy German fire, the commandos retreated, having achieved next to nothing. The RAF lost 92 planes, the Royal Navy 33 landing craft and a destroyer. And as for the poor souls who'd been sent ashore, 3,623 out of 6,086 were either killed, wounded or captured.

While the Germans were generally jubilant about the fa ure of the ra d, one pernicious story persisted about it that incensed them, not least their notor ously narky Führer. One of the few ob ectives the ra d had achieved was the taking of German prisoners for intelligence-gathering purposes. But not all of these prisoners, it transpired, made it out alive, and reports suggested that the bodies of German soldiers had been washed up on Dieppe's beaches with their hands t ed. In response, Hitler ordered that all Canad an prisoners in German camps be shack ed in revenge

BY THE TIME THE SHACKLES CAME OFF, MOGGY HAD SPENT THE BEST PART OF FOUR MONTHS CHAINED TO A CONCRETE FLOOR

In Stalag VIII-B, that would've caused the camp commandant a headache. The 1,000 or so Canadians he had in the camp were part of h s workforce – indeed, many of his best foresters and lumberjacks were to be found among the r ranks. So instead, as Moggy claimed in his book, the RAF prisoners "who were of no use to the Germans as non-workers" were shackled

Confined to barracks, Moggy and his mates were forced to sit on the floors of their huts, their hands bound in front of them with stiff, fibre ropes that cut into their wrists. This part cular ordeal continued for three weeks. Then things got worse. The crude wrist restraints were replaced with metal handcuffs, which the prisoners had to endure for a further eight weeks, again on their backsides on the concrete floors of their huts. Eventually, the Red Cross gained access to Stalag VIII-B and pleaded with the commandant to get rid of the handcuffs. This he did – only to replace them with marg nally less uncomfortab e chains until the Führer's spiteful gaze turned to more pressing matters. By the time the shackles came off, Moggy had spent the best part of four

Maurice "Moggy" Mayne's timeline

1940

25 MAY

A 19-year-old Maurice "Moggy" Mayne enlists in the RAF and is given the job of air gunner. He is later assigned to 217 Squadron, Coastal Command.

1942

12 FEBRUARY

Moggy takes part in the "Channel Dash" attack of the German battleship Scharnhorst, as – along with Prinz Eugen and Gneisenau – it steams towards the safety of German ports.

6 APRIL

While attacking a convoy off the Norwegian coast, Moggy's plane is shot down. The pilot is killed and Moggy is captured.

28 APRIL

Moggy is sent to Stalag VIII-B POW camp in Lamsdorf, Upper Silesia in present-day Poland, where he is imprisoned in the high-security compound reserved for RAF personnel.

19 AUGUST

Canadian commandos raid Dieppe. Alleged atrocities against German troops lead camp guards to take it out on Moggy and the rest of the RAF POWs.

1944

FEBRUARY

Moggy breaks out of the high-security compound and into the New Zealand Army compound. There, he assumes the identity of Kiwi soldier Len Murray and joins a work detail that travels off the camp.

The German battleship Scharnhorst, which was the target of an attack by Moggy's squadron soon after he joined the RAF

months chained to a cold concrete floor. By the end, he was determined to get out.

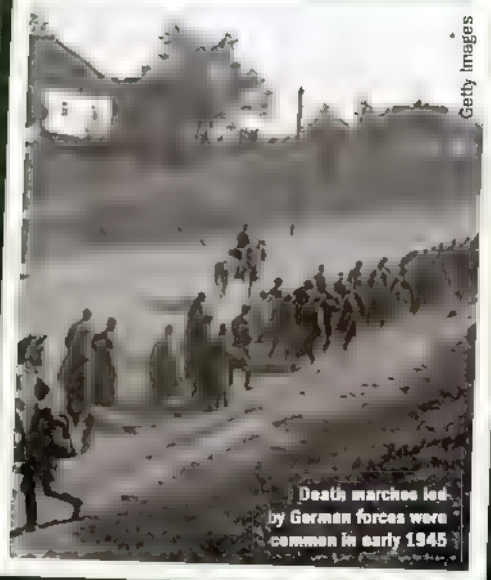
When Hubert Brooks, another RAF POW, suddenly disappeared from the camp in 1943 and was later confirmed to have successfully escaped and joined the Polish resistance, Moggy started investigating how he'd done it. Brooks, it turned out, had got through the wire separating the RAF compound from the nearby New Zealand compound, swapped identities with one of the soldiers imprisoned there who was now taking Brooks' place in the regular RAF roll calls – and then done a runner while out with one of the Kiwi work parties. The Germans, apparently, were none the wiser, and Moggy figured he'd work the same plan.

Poor health

Early in 1944, almost two years after he'd first arrived at the camp, Moggy found himself near the front of the queue to bust out. He was approached by representatives from the Escape Committee, who told him that his time was fast approaching. He had a month to prepare. In the meantime, the Escape Committee would arrange everything else he needed, including his paperwork – forged identity card, passport and travel passes – to help him get across Nazi-occupied Europe.

Once out, the Committee's plan was for Moggy to pose as a Belgian electrician who was working his way through Germany. They'd assigned him a brand-new – and, according to Moggy, unpronounceable – Flemish name. Very few German officials were likely to speak Flemish, the Committee decided, and Moggy's German was good enough for him to get by speaking that. Only his accent would betray him as a non-German, and it was hoped that he'd be able to convince whoever was asking that he'd grown up near Bruges rather than Bermondsey.

Once out of the camp, he would take a series of trains and head north towards the Ostsee coast. His destination was the port of Stralsund. The Escape Committee had decided it was small enough to be largely free of stringent security checks, but big enough to get Moggy out of the country. Get to Stralsund, Moggy was told, and get on a boat bound for neutral Sweden, just over 60 miles across the Baltic Sea. Do all ▶



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Death marches led by German forces were common in early 1945

WALK OF DEATH

On 29 December 1944, with the Russian Army approaching, the Germans shut Stalag VIII-B. Moggy was put into a column of 1,400 Allied POWs and made to march westward. They kept going throughout January and February 1945, reaching Bad Sulza, near Leipzig in eastern Germany, by late March. That winter was one of the coldest of the 20th Century, with temperatures dropping as low as -25°C. The men, malnourished after years of imprisonment, and without proper winter clothing, suffered appallingly. Survival, as Moggy put it in his book *Down But Not Out* (The History Press, £17.99), depended on "your fighting spirit". But even he was nearly broken. The sole of one of his feet simply fell off one day when he removed his boot, and at the end of the march he contracted dysentery.

Somehow, though, he survived – one of just 400 of the marchers who did so. Similar POW death marches took place all over Germany throughout early 1945. By the end of the war, an estimated 3,500 Allied troops had perished in the exodus from the east.

1945

MAR Unbeknownst to Moggy, "The Great Escape" takes place at the nearby Stalag Luft III camp. Seventy-six Allied POWs flee, sparking a Europe-wide manhunt.

APR Moggy escapes from Stalag VIII-B. By the afternoon, he's in Berlin. By evening, he's reached the north German coast.

APR Moggy is rumbled while breaking into the docks at Stralsund, as he looks for a boat to take him to neutral Sweden.

MAY Moggy is returned to Stalag VIII-B, where he's put in the punishment block for several weeks.

JAN In the face of the Russian advance, Moggy and around 1,400 others are forced by their German captors to flee west. They begin a 330-mile, three-month-long death march to Bad Sulza in Germany.

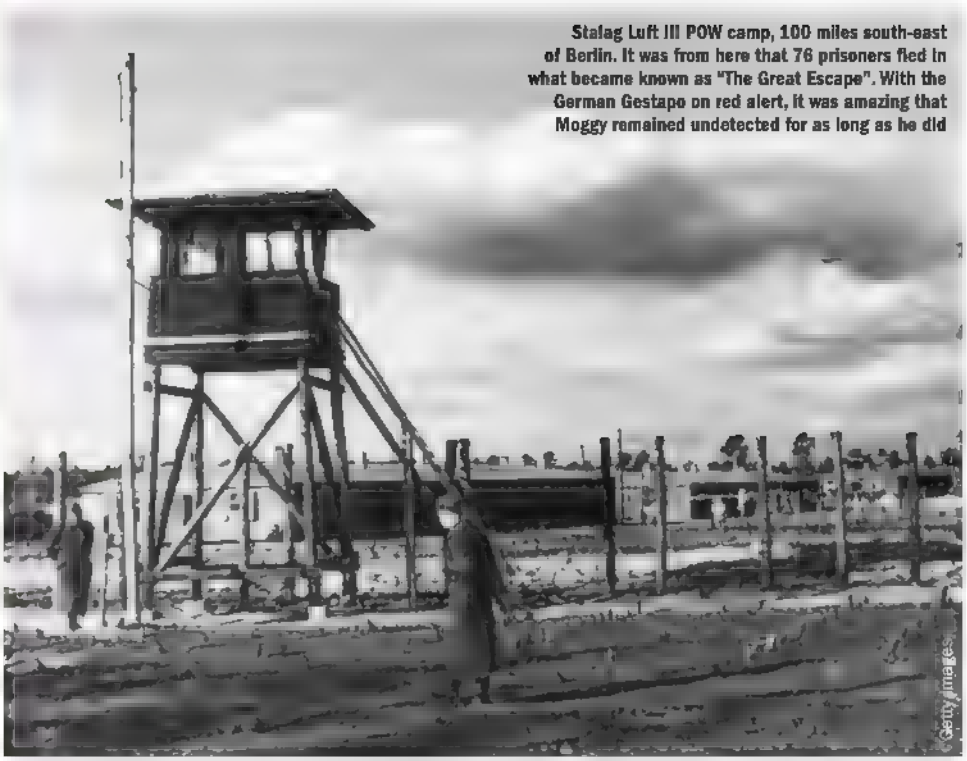
MAY After three years away, Moggy finally returns to his family in London, and marries his long-time sweetheart Sylvia.

GERMAN POW CAMPS

Built on the site of a prisoner-of-war camp left over from the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1, Stalag VIII-B was used by the Germans throughout World War One. It reopened in 1939, initially to house captured Polish soldiers. By 1945, however, it had played host to over 100,000 POWs from Britain, the US, Australia, Belgium, India, British Palestine, Canada, France, Greece, Holland, South Africa and Yugoslavia.

Another camp, Stalag VIII-F (pictured), was set up nearby to house Russian prisoners. The camp was square-shaped, with each side measuring around half a mile, and was hemmed in by double-banked, 8ft-high barbed-wire fences. Guard towers, armed with machine guns and searchlights, stood at regular intervals. The space between the fences was filled with barbed wire and at night, the perimeter was patrolled by guards with Alsatian dogs.

Despite such security, one inmate of Stalag VIII-B, Horace Greasley, a young Private in the Leicestershire Regiment who'd been captured after Dunkirk, broke in and out of the camp over 200 times, for nocturnal adventures with a local German girl he'd fallen in love with!



Stalag Luft III POW camp, 100 miles south-east of Berlin. It was from here that 76 prisoners fled in what became known as "The Great Escape". With the German Gestapo on red alert, it was amazing that Moggy remained undetected for as long as he did

Getty Images

that, and you'll get home. First, though, Moggy had to get out of the RAF compound and into the New Zealand barracks.

The man who'd been selected to swap identities with Moggy was a Kiwi Private called Len Murray. Murray had been captured during the German invasion of Crete in May 1941, and was in poor health. He was on a work party assigned to do heavy labouring in a nearby factory complex, and was in no fit state to escape. In fact, for Murray, the move into the RAF compound, where no work was permitted, would bring its own release, allowing him the time and space he needed to recuperate. Moggy, for his part, didn't tell any of his other inmates what he was up to. Nor did he wish them farewell when his time came to depart. It was the way things were done in the camp, as hearsay was something that the German captors were doubtless tuned into

Given the slip

One night, in February 1944, Moggy crept out of his barracks and slipped through the shadows towards the fence. The "gate" in the wire that the Escape Committee had previously cut for him was exactly where they said it would be. Moggy slithered towards it on his belly, freezing cold and with heart thumping, as the searchlight from the guard tower swept over him, then stopped. It lingered on him, the guard obviously trying to decide whether what he was looking at was worth shooting at or not. Moggy didn't move an inch. He couldn't – his life depended on it. The light hesitated, and then – thankfully – moved on. Moments later, so did Moggy.

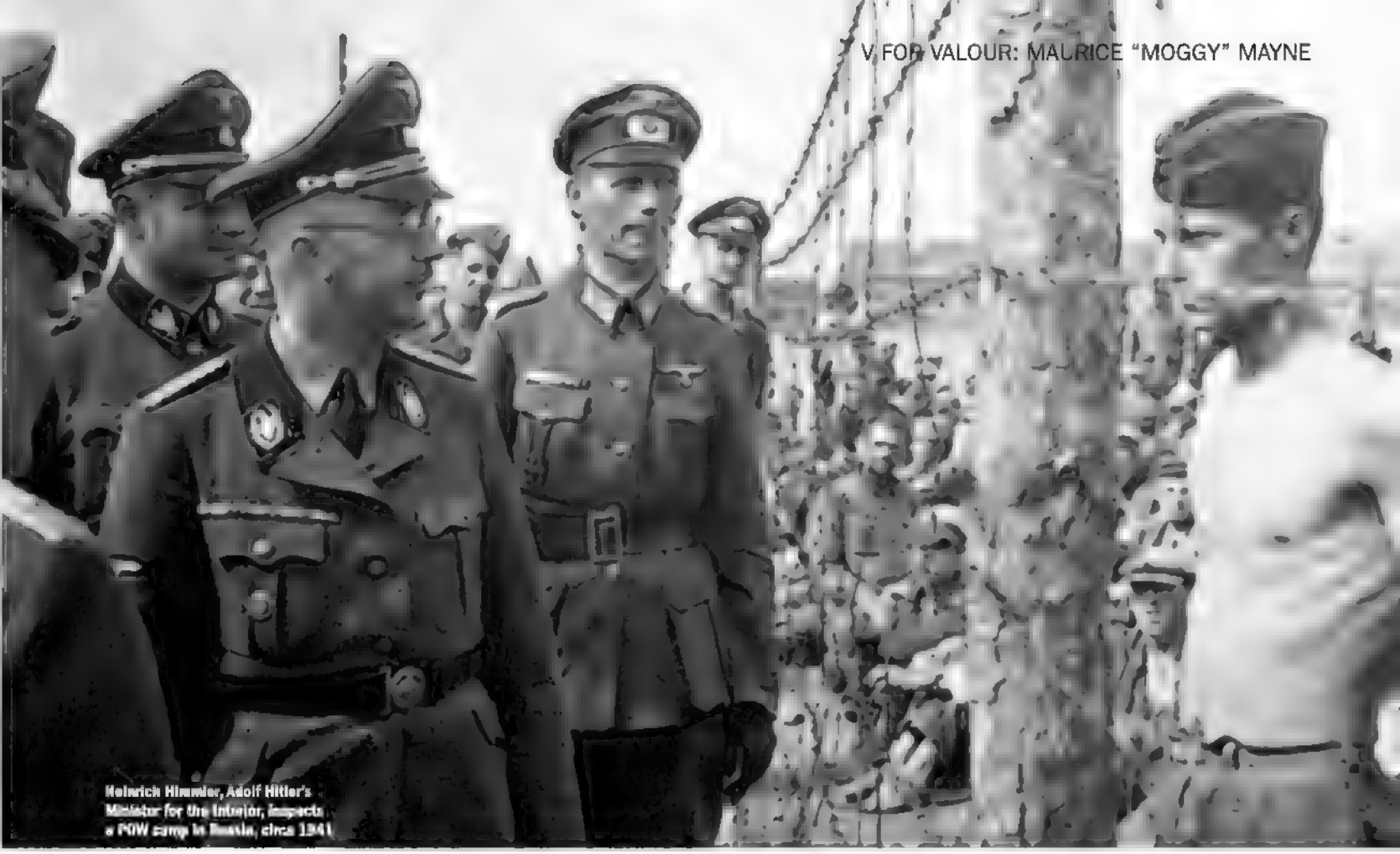
Before long, he was in the New Zealand compound and had swapped places with Murray, who successfully made it back the other way. The next morning, Moggy – now answering to the name of Len – left the confines of the camp for the first time in two years. As part of a Kiwi work party, he now had to figure out how to give the guards the slip when he was outside the wire

He was put to work in a nearby factory complex, labouring on a building site. He'd been working there for more than a month, looking for a way out, when another POW, who knew he was planning to escape, told him he'd seen something that might just help. The man took Moggy around the back of some warehouses to reveal a mound of earth piled up against a wall. It was a slope, essentially, that some of the free workers in the factory had built as a shortcut out of the complex, possibly so that they could get home quicker, and possibly because they had things in their pockets that the guards on the gates wouldn't approve of. Either way, it led to the outside world, and if they could slide down this ramp undetected, Moggy wondered, why couldn't he?

By now, he'd managed to get hold of some civilian clothing to supplement the adapted uniform the Escape Committee had helped him with, including a Tyrolean-style hat with a feather in it. He'd also got some dye, which he used to turn his khaki trousers blue. Everything, it seemed, was finally in place

At 8am on Good Friday 1944, Moggy made his move. That morning, he'd marched to work as usual in his New Zealand Army uniform. Then, accompanied by a Kiwi soldier, he'd slipped behind the warehouses, changed into his "civilian" clothes, given his uniform to his accomplice for disposal, and darted to the top of the ramp by the wall. Pausing only to wave goodbye to his accomplice, he jumped down into the street below. For the first time in 737 days, Moggy was no longer a prisoner. He was, however, on the run in the middle of the deadliest empire the world has ever known.

Getty Images



Heinrich Himmler, Adolf Hitler's Minister for the Interior, inspects a POW camp in Russia, circa 1941

He caught a bus to the local train station. A series of train journeys followed, and by afternoon, Moggy had travelled across Nazi-occupied Poland and was in Berlin, the heart of the Third Reich. Here, he wandered the streets in search of Hauptbahnhof station, from where he could catch a train to his final destination, Stralsund on the coast. Lost and running out of daylight, Moggy decided to ask for directions – which is when he suddenly found himself in the grasp of that huge policeman.

But the copper wasn't about to arrest Moggy. He was physically turning him around and pointing him in the right direction. "Da!" ("There!") was all the big German said to Moggy, who thanked the man and walked the way he'd been shown. Before long, the station appeared in front of the young Londoner, out of the late-afternoon sunshine. Moggy stepped inside, into the cool shadows of the booking hall, and bought a ticket north. By nightfall, he was in Stralsund

On the brink

Moggy found an all-night café at the station, where he reckoned a stranger would look less conspicuous, and settled in to wait for dawn. A little after midnight, two German military policemen, complete with metal gorgets hanging about their necks, strode in and began checking everybody's papers. There was no way Moggy could make a run for it, and by now he was too tired to bluff his way through a conversation with them. So he pulled out his travel papers and slumped down on the table in front of him, pretending to be asleep, his documents conspicuously held in his limp hand. Taken in by the ruse, the policemen merely removed the papers from his grasp, inspected them and put them back on the table next to him. Moggy had gambled, and he'd won again. How much longer would his luck hold, though?, he wondered as he left the café at sunrise, heading down the cobbled streets towards the dock.

He was about to find out. The dockyard entrance was controlled by a guard, and as Moggy had no legitimate excuse for entering, he skirted its perimeter, looking for a suitable place to go over the fence. Finding one, he pulled himself up.

Moggy's achievement had been remarkable. The day before, the 23-year-old Londoner had been a POW over 400 miles to the south-east, in occupied Poland. He'd crossed right through

THE DOOR TO A NEARBY HUT OPENED, AND OUT STEPPED A SECURITY GUARD BRANDISHING A REVOLVER

the heart of the Nazi empire and wandered the streets of Hitler's capital. Now, here on the dockside in Stralsund, he was on the brink of his goal. Sadly, though, the brink was as close as he was going to get. As he landed on the other side of that fence, the door to a nearby hut opened, and out stepped a security guard brandishing a revolver. After everything he'd been through – the escape from the compound, the month passing himself off as a Kiwi, the break-out from the camp and his remarkable odyssey across the Nazi empire – it had come to this. Moggy was to be followed by a middle-aged night watchman he'd probably just woken up.

Rumbled and fearing that he could get handed over to Gestapo if he resisted, Moggy surrendered to the security guard, who then handed him over to the police. Guards from Stalag VIII-B were sent to retrieve their errant inmate. As Moggy was travelling back with them, he learnt of another remarkable break-out, at Stalag Luft III, a POW camp not far from his own.

"The Great Escape", as it later came to be known, had seen 76 POWs escape through tunnels on a single night. Moggy had been travelling across Germany completely oblivious to the fact that a nationwide manhunt for Allied POWs had been in full swing for nearly a month. For him to have got as far as he did was amazing; to do so under these circumstances was miraculous. So far, the guards told him, 73 of the escapees had been caught. Then they told him something that turned his blood to ice. Of the 50 POWs the Gestapo had recovered, all had been shot in suspicious circumstances. If Moggy and his guards ran into any Gestapo on the way back, his captors shrugged, they wouldn't be able to protect him.

Mercifully, Moggy's journey back to Stalag VIII-B was uneventful. On arrival, he was sent to the punishment blocks, but was back among his RAF comrades – with Len Murray safely back among the Kiwis – by the second week of May. By then, Moggy had also received freshly forged papers from the Escape Committee, and was planning his next break out. A few weeks later, though, signs began to appear around the camp that read: "The Escape From Prison Camps Is No Longer A Sport". It was clear, the 50 POWs the Gestapo had captured had all been shot deliberately as a warning. From now on, escaping was a crime the Nazis would punish by death.

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REVIEWS

History Of War casts its eye over the military-based **books, DVDs and games** that may or may not convince you to part with your cash this month

WAR IN THE CRIMEA: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

Ian Fletcher and Natalia Ishchenko *The History Press* **RRP £19.99**

★★★★

Although it's considered one of the first modern wars, wherein med a coverage and photography helped document the conflict for future generations to explore, the Crimean War hasn't left many last ng dents n British culture in the way that its 20th-century counterparts have – understandable, perhaps, considering it wasn't a global war (although, since it inv ved Britain, France, the Ottoman emp re, Sardinia and Russ a, it was far from a localised skirmish), and didn't have as much help from the mass media to make us a l feel a part of it.

Yet it wasn't without its enduring stories and iconic figures: the communication failures and poor planning that led to the Charge of the Light Brigade have he ped it to become a metaphor for gung ho strategical blundering, and Florence Night ngal e has long been the poster girl for medicine's key role in battle. It was the media's reporting of the war that was chiefly responsible for that, helped n no small part by the advent of photography. In addition to art sts' suitably airbrushed illustrations of reports coming back from the battlefield, the work of p oneering photographers like Roger Fenton meant that there were at least a few genuine snapshots of the ndiv duals involved, even if Fenton ma nly concentrated on portrait shots rather than the k nd of visceral action scenes caught on camera during the American Civil War a few years later.

A number of newspaper llustrators and painters, such as W lliam S mpson, a so travelled to the front, and the depict ons of events in periodicals such as the *Illustrated London News* gave a str king v sual flavour of what life was like for our boys, even if it was considerably sanitised for public consumpt on.

Those images form the bedrock of this illustrated history, now out n paperback six years after its original publication. Added to those mages are numerous maps and a collection of fascinating photos of key battleground locat ons, taken half a century later in 1904. The extensively illustrated nature of *War In The Crimea* may mean it will never be regarded a ongside academic stud es of the conflict, but there's a lot to be said for pictures telling a more evocat ve story than hidebound h storians' dry, studied words can, and as such the book provides a fine ntroduction to the conflict for those of us who like to have a ittle colour injected into a ta e, rather than suffer endless footnote-strewn tomes fu l of text.

Better still, it's a book written from more than one point of view Inevitab y, most of what military history buffs know about th s war comes from a Brit sh viewpoint.

One of the major strengths of this new history is that it incorporates a Russian view and Russian research into the war – hence the dual authorsh p. That extra attention to detail is reflected in a superbly evocat ve cover picture, wh ch g ves a pretty accurate impression of what the soldiers involved looked like.

It's easy to assume that a book full of pictures would be somehow "dumbed down" but, while there are far more in-depth studies of the Crimean War out there, this conc se, unpretentious and even-handed account of the causes, course and results of the conflict rema ns a valuab e one. **Johnny Sharp**

One of the major strengths of this new history is that it incorporates a Russian view and Russian research into the war

1914: OVER BY CHRISTMAS

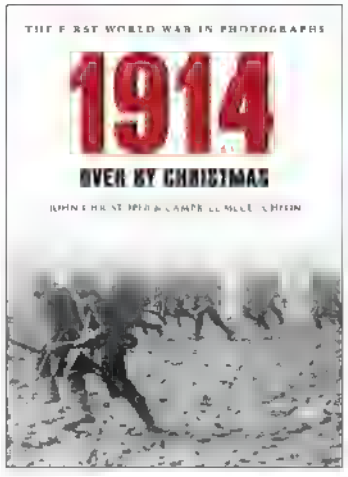
John Christopher & Campbell McCutcheon *Amberley Publishing* **RRP £15.99**

★★★

Thanks to this year's centenary, there's a heightened interest in the Great War. But, as the title of this book suggests, it may not have been such an instrumental conflict had the popular consensus come to fruition, and it finished by the end of 1914. Christopher and McCutcheon's book focuses on the first five months of the war, giving both a written and visual account of the events that played out between August and December.

The book doesn't go into any major depth, and may be familiar territory for some. It's still a satisfying read, however. The introduction is of particular interest, looking at the naval arms race between Britain and Germany, which is presented as being a significant catalyst for the war.

The visual content combines photography, maps and artwork from the time, mostly depicting Europe's nations preparing for battle rather than in the midst of it. There are some fascinating inclusions – pictures that dispel



the image of the Great War as a mechanised conflict, with German forces relying on horses for transport (as both sides did in the war's early stages), and even French soldiers on bicycles. Conversely, photos of the mechanical, oversized firearms (in particular the German howitzers, which seem primitive now) are still a powerful sight – a reminder of the war's sheer destructive force.

For experts, there's little new to discover, but as a starting point this makes for perfectly adequate reading. Further instalments covering 1915-18 would be a welcome addition. **Tom Fordy**

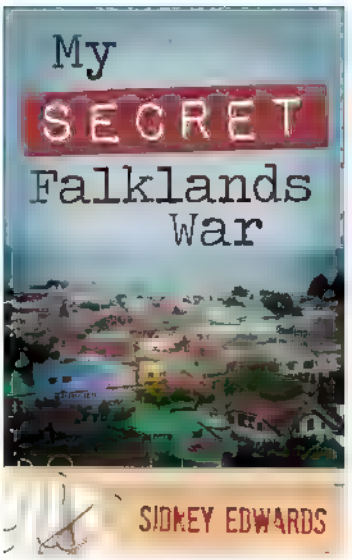
MY SECRET FALKLANDS WAR

Sidney Edwards *Book Guild* **RRP £7.99**

★★★★

Not a lot was known about Sidney Edwards' role in the Falklands War before the 30-year rule meant that he could publish his memoirs of his covert mission in Chile to arrange assistance in ending Argentina's aggression. However, his "Sidgrams" (as Margaret Thatcher referred to his signals between Chile and Britain) undoubtedly influenced tactics during the conflict, and in this engaging book he reveals what went on behind the scenes before the Argentine surrender on 14 June 1982.

Edwards was whisked away from mowing his lawn on Easter Sunday to a top-secret briefing with his friend, Air Vice Marshal Ken Hayr, and was soon liaising with General Rodriguez, with whom he shared a number of hairy escapades. On one occasion, while discussing tactics, the General's briefcase fell off his desk, disgorging a loaded pistol and three live hand grenades onto the floor. Another time, their plane was hit by such turbulence that they were left flying upside down, "like rag dolls" in their harnesses.



Edwards declares that the sinking of the General Belgrano was justified, and explains that, after the attack on HMS Sir Galahad, he negotiated the use of the Chileans' radar and San Felix Island as a base for the Nimrod aircraft.

It was his manipulation of the media over the Sea King helicopter incident that went someway to Edwards receiving the OBE, although only a handful of people, including the Queen, knew the real reason – until now. **Simon Lee Green**

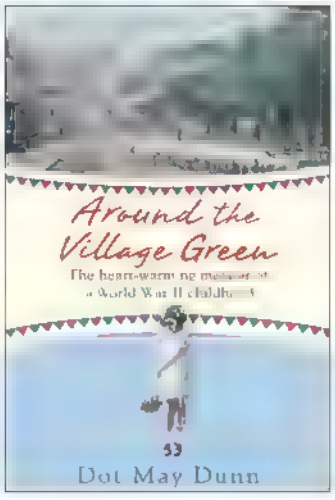
AROUND THE VILLAGE GREEN

Dot May Dunn *Orion* **RRP £6.99**

★★★★

Around The Village Green is the heart-warming account of author and miner's daughter Dot May Dunn's childhood in a small village in Derbyshire throughout the Second World War. During the conflict, both an American base and a prisoner-of-war camp are built close to her home, and Dot soon starts to hear the adults around her talking about war, though to begin with it means little to her. As time goes by, she forges an unlikely friendship with one of the soldiers, but the impact of war soon makes itself known, and both the friendship and Dot's innocent childhood are threatened.

This is an easy, cosy read. There are plenty of funny moments, most notably as Dot and her childhood friends attempt to make sense of what's happening in the grown-up world around them. When the Americans arrive, Dot's brother Jack tells her, "They're the cowboys, like Roy Rogers," which of course means that she's confused when she sees them arriving in jeeps and not on horses.



The book lacks some depth and neglects some of the harsher realities that were endured during the Thirties and Forties. We hear a little about Dot's father, who was in charge of the miners' union and campaigned tirelessly for better safety conditions, but we're left thinking it would've been interesting to hear more of this.

Nevertheless, it's obvious that Dot looks back at this unusual time with fondness, and this warmth shines through. A must-read for anyone who fancies a nostalgic trip down memory lane to those more innocent times. **Hannah Mears**

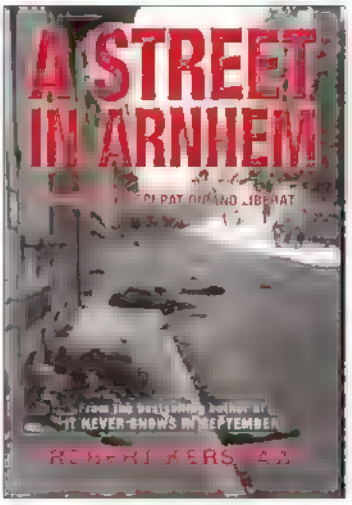
A STREET IN ARNHEM

Robert Kershaw *Ian Allan Publishing* **RRP £20**

★★★★★

There are at least two sides to every story, and Robert Kershaw's 2010 study of the 1944 Allied assault on Arnhem, *It Never Snows In September*, was deservedly acclaimed for exploring the disastrous Allied operation from a German standpoint, and revising the prevailing view that the Allied reverse was all their fault rather than the German Army's enduring strength as a military force.

Staying in the Netherlands for this follow-up, he now looks at the same battle from the perspective of a single stretch of the same road – the Utrechtseweg – and its inhabitants. While the accounts of the combatants themselves still offer valuable insights into the day-to-day realities of war, and the confusion and strategic factors that would become decisive, it's the stories of the Dutch civilians that really tug at the heart strings, not least because so many of them were children at the time. And it begs the question – how would you feel if the mother of all bust-ups took place in your back yard and, despite having very little to do



with it, you ended up getting caught in the crossfire?

Kershaw's account also brings home to you the bewilderment of the war's innocent victims at a time when, unlike now, there was very little news to be found beyond Chinese whispers, gossip, paranoia and panicked confusion. Many of these people really didn't know who was attacking who at various points, and where they stood in the middle of it all. As such, it's not just an important new contribution to the military history of World War Two, but a fascinating slice of social history to boot. **Johnny Sharp**

NAPOLEON ON CAMPAIGN

H.A. Carruthers *Pen & Sword Military* **RRP £25**

★★★

Half a century or so after Napoleon Bonaparte led the French Army to dominate Europe, photography came along to bring pictorial coverage of war into a new era. But back at the turn of the 19th Century, scores of painters made their name by illustrating the glorious – and inglorious – exploits of leaders like Napoleon in beautifully rendered detail. Some of their best work can be found in this book – some designed to glorify the great man, some aiming to highlight the gruesome realities of war, and some simply acting as an impartial observer to world events.

Napoleon obsessives looking for elusively rare images in Harriet Carruthers' collection might be disappointed, as this is something of a "Best Of..." compilation curated by the author, who herself is more of an enthusiastic observer than an academic student of the period. The vast majority of these illustrations are fairly well-known and can be found on the internet with little trouble – but is there really any substitute for seeing them so lovingly presented, in a landscape-shaped hardback volume? Even when that volume has a £25 price tag?

The quality of the prints is the saving grace of this book, ranging from Fernand Cormon's action-packed battlefields to Edouard Detaille's gritty realism and Horace Vernet's populist romanticism, and the narrative chiefly serves to tell us what those artists were attempting to depict. For that reason, *Napoleon On Campaign* can't really tell the whole, tangled tale of the French General's long rise to prominence and subsequent defeats and exiles. But when you find yourself gazing at some of these images as if standing in an art gallery, temporarily lost in the wash of colours and chaos of this tumultuous pocket of a bygone age, you're tempted to just drink it all in and enjoy. **Johnny Sharp**

THE WORKERS' WAR

Anthony Burton *The History Press* **RRP £19.99**

★★★★

At the outbreak of WWI, Britain was no longer considered the workshop of the world, and a complete overhaul of her political and technological attitudes was necessary. It is how this modernisation produced major social changes in all areas of life that Anthony Burton's book focuses on, not least on the crucial role played by women, who took up jobs previously considered unsuitable.

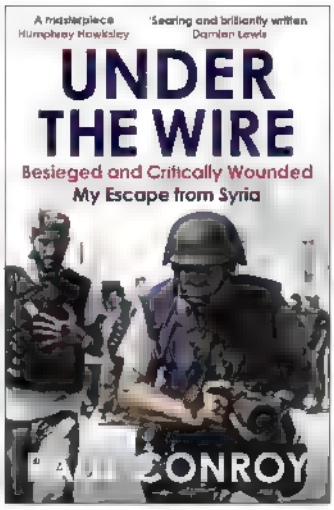
Burton traces the development of every conceivable aspect of industry: from changes to the railway network, to the problems faced by the inland waterways; from the supply of war materials and manufacture of cordite (described as "stirring the devil's porridge"), to the development of the internal combustion engine; from the steel industry's importance in the development of ships, tanks and aeroplanes, to the pitiful conditions miners worked in; and from the large-scale production of uniforms in overcrowded textile mills, to the changes in farming needed to meet the demands of a worsening food shortage. Burton even devotes a chapter to the entertainment industry, which, despite new laws making it illegal to buy a drink for a friend in the pub, was so vital in lifting the nation's spirits.

One might think that to cover all this in just 215 pages is providing merely a cursory glance at the subject, but by looking at the social effects of British industry, Burton has stressed the importance of remembering the sacrifices made by those who served at home just as much as we do those who fought on the battlefields. This should be required reading on the National Curriculum. **Simon Lee Green**

UNDER THE WIRE

Paul Conroy *Quercus* **RRP £9.99**

★★★★★



Our candid view into modern-day warfare is largely thanks to the efforts of our fearless war correspondents. And as war photographer Paul Conroy knows only too well, frontline reportage can come at a devastating price. His gripping book *Under The Wire* documents the days leading up to the death of his friend and fellow journalist Marie Colvin, who was killed while they were reporting from a brutal Syrian warzone in 2012.

Conroy puts us behind the camera to reveal the realities of being a war correspondent in the 21st Century. Against better judgement and the advice of others, he and Conroy head to the under-siege city of Homs in western Syria. Colvin's journalistic integrity is unparalleled – having already lost an eye to shrapnel in Sri Lanka, she's intent on reporting on the horrors of the Syrian civil war, and in one of the opening chapters she leads Conroy on a crawl through a claustrophobia-inducing tunnel into Homs, where they interview survivors of the siege.

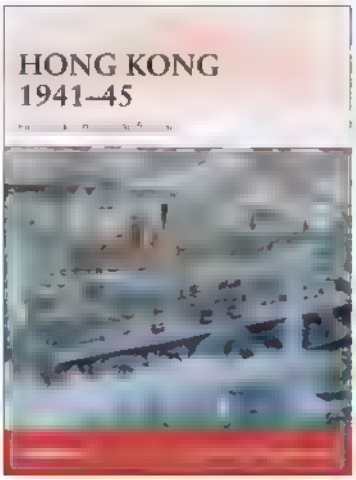
Conroy knows better but follows his colleague anyway. His sense of duty is as awe-inspiring as Colvin's tenacity. And as the story continues towards the event that will claim Colvin and French photographer Rémi Ochlik's lives – a deadly explosion in their makeshift media hub – it's a tense and humbling experience.

Conroy's writing reveals him as a likeable and ordinary man, albeit one in an extraordinary situation (after the explosion, he's left with a hole in his leg big enough to put his hand through, yet he still escapes). For anyone with a modicum of interest in modern warfare, this is essential. **Tom Fordy**

HONG KONG 1941-45

Benjamin Lai *Osprey* **RRP £14.99**

★★★



The latest offering from the "Campaign" book series will be of particular interest to British readers. While the beginning of the Pacific War is largely associated with the attack on Pearl Harbor, that was just one of several Japanese strikes that took place on 8 December 1941 – this book documents the simultaneous attack on British Hong Kong (better known as the Battle of Hong Kong), which marked the beginning of a four-year-long Japanese occupation of the island.

At just 96 pages, *Hong Kong 1941-45* is hardly an exhaustive dissection of the Britain-Japan conflict – like the other books in the series, though, it's formatted as an easy-to-use reference book, offering a solid introduction to Hong Kong's role in the Second World War. The book is broken down into various topics – profiling commanders on the opposing sides, their respective plans, resources and key battles – all of which give valuable insight into both the Japanese and British military manoeuvres. Some of the stories make for fascinating reading – such as a daring escape by a one-legged Chinese Rear Admiral and 60 fellow survivors just weeks after Japan had taken Hong Kong.

The book also includes maps, timelines of events and a chronology of battles, predating the Battle of Hong Kong by four years, starting with the Japanese attack on Chinese forces – the Marco Polo Bridge Incident – in July 1937.

Though it's an essentially brief look at a significant part of the Second World War, *Hong Kong 1941-45* remains an informative entry into this reliable series of books. **Tom Fordy**

THE SAMURAI: SWORDS, SHOGUNS AND SEPPUKU

Ben Hubbard *The History Press*
RRP £12.99
★★★★

To this day, there's much mystique and wonder surrounding the 6,852 islands that make up Japan, and its legendary Samurai warriors still have the power to capture the most vivid of imaginations.

For those of us in the largely uninitiated West, our "knowledge" of these noble warriors is limited to what we've seen in Hollywood's portrayals. In fact, author Ben Hubbard dedicates an entire chapter, entitled Popular Culture, to this very subject. But we are as misinformed as these cinematic forays if we believe that that's where the Samurai story begins and ends, and this is where Hubbard's concise account proves to be a valuable asset.

With both adults and children in mind (illustrations and photographs accompany the text throughout), Hubbard tells us that, yes, the Samurai were both fearsome and fearless fighters, who followed a code – Bushido – that advocated virtues such as honour, loyalty and pride.

But that they were also largely masters of their own downfall. Modern warfare and its machinery would mean that their mastery of skills more suited to hand-to-hand combat would become outdated. In isolation for so long, the Samurai were set to became nothing more than a curious fascination.

Hubbard's tome will be a welcome addition to any home library for both generations to enjoy. Having read *The Samurai*, this father in particular is hoping to learn more about their mysterious counterpart and silent assassin, the ninja. Mr Hubbard, over to you. **Louis Isaac**

A MAD CATASTROPHE

Geoffrey Wawro *Basic Books* **RRP £19.99**
★★★★

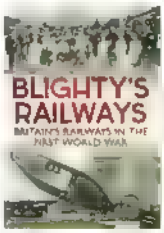
It's fair to say that none of the major powers came out of World War One covered in glory, and history has soundly scotched whatever propaganda claims they made about it at the time. But in this new book on the conflict, Geoffrey Wawro shows that for the Austro-Hungarian empire, it was particularly disastrous – almost to the point of farce – in terms of the dismally inept way it lurched into the conflict, and its hopeless attempts to deal with 20th-century warfare.

He depicts a regime already on its last legs, which was determined to rage against the dying of the light by throwing itself headlong into a war with ill-equipped, barely trained soldiers who could scarcely communicate with each other in the same language. Meanwhile, if a wrong strategical decision could be made, its commanders seemed to conspire to make it, and Wawro explains in clear, step-by-step detail the myriad ways they got it wrong.

Little details help to illuminate the lions-led-by-donkeys approach on the ground, such as soldiers being forced to look for stray horses to put in harness when their own collapsed from exhaustion, or search the enemy's dead for weapons due to a shortage of supplies. Wawro also documents in unflinching detail the numerous atrocities committed on the Serb population during the conflict, outrages borne largely of blustering overkill on the part of the Austro-Hungarian Generals. As such, *A Mad Catastrophe* is a highly readable and cogently argued book that, once again, shows the level of sheer idiocy that lay behind this pivotal period of history. **Johnny Sharp**

BLIGHTY'S RAILWAYS

Alexander J Mullay *Amberley Publishing*
RRP £17.99
★★★



Unlike today, there was a time when Britain's railways were highly regarded and able to meet the demands placed upon them – that time was during WWI.

As today, Britain's rail network was privately owned, with companies involved in mergers and takeovers. Many in the Railway Executive Committee rightly predicted that the Government would take control of their lines and stock without consulting them.

Mullay details the requirements the railways had to meet: armoured trains to protect against air raids; conveying troops and armour by sea; and the eventual transportation of the war wounded and POWs on ambulance trains.

There was a personal cost, too; 184,000 railwaymen enlisted, their jobs filled by boys and women, helping to change opinion in favour of female emancipation. It's Mullay's eye for the human factor that saves this book from being overburdened by facts and figures. **Simon Lee Green**

1939

Louis Archard *Amberley Publishing*
RRP £15.99
★★★★

Subtitled "The Second World War In The Air In Photographs", this book offers rare images of aerial warfare taking in the first year of the conflict.

The author's detailed introduction discusses the pervading mood of the summer of 1939, during the lead up to hostilities, and the clues that indicated how the war in the air would come to dominate the entire conflict.

Rarely seen photos include images of the RAF's daring bombing mission against the Kiel Canal, footage of which went on to be used in Alexander Korda's 1939 film *The Lion Has Wings*. Most of the pictures are in black and white, but there's also a splendid colour section. The colour photos are notably all German, highlighting their leadership in the world of photography at the time.

1939 is the first in a series covering the war in the air, year by year. If the others are as good as this, we're in for a treat. **Alix Stevens**

BRITISH POSTERS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

John Christopher
Amberley Publishing
RRP £20
★★★★★

For those interested in war propaganda, *British Posters Of The First World War* provides a valuable addition to your bookshelf. Featuring a collection of over 100 high-quality colour reproductions, the book focuses heavily on the art and design of the posters, and, as such, is primarily a visual experience. However, the supporting explanations are insightful and thought-provoking, putting the posters and their famous slogans into context.

The book takes readers on a journey, explaining the vital role poster advertising played in the story of the Great War. You can follow the changing face of First World War posters, from the glorification of voluntary enlistment and the early pleas of "For King and Country", to the demonisation of the enemy's barbarism, Home Front guilt and the promotion of comradery at the Front. **Alix Stevens**

SOMME 1916: BATTLE STORY

Andrew Robertshaw *The History Press*
RRP £9.99
★★★★

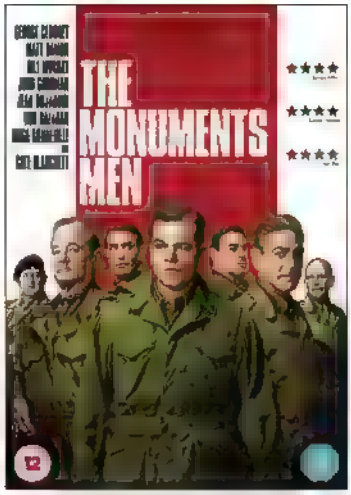
The Somme has become a byword for the horrors of war, and for the senseless waste of human life. Ask the proverbial man on the Clapham omnibus what he knows about World War One, and he may not even know who actually fought in it, but he'll probably know of the horror that occurred at the Somme. Yet, after the mass slaughter of the battle's first day, it eventually turned into a decisive victory for the BEF, and one that turned the tide of the war on the Western Front.

It's that wider context that is Andrew Robertshaw's strong suit here – he ignores the simplistic mythology surrounding the battle to take a dispassionate, scholarly look at why and how it happened (arguing that trench warfare was partly understandable, and sometimes successful), and what it meant. As such, his book is a breath of fresh air, and an essential read for anyone who wants to find out the complicated facts behind the folklore. **Johnny Sharp**

THE MONUMENTS MEN

Dir: George Clooney *20th Century Fox Home Entertainment* **RRP £9.99**

★★



The story of *The Monuments Men* is, without a doubt, utterly fascinating and helps only to emphasise that the Second World War was not just a tragedy in terms of the loss of human life, but also in terms of the effect it had on cultural and artistic endeavour.

As the Nazis' power spread across Europe, so Adolf Hitler ordered his minions to burn many thousands of books, along with works of art almost too precious for words, simply for the sake of ownership, or the impending lack thereof. Sadly, this tragic tale of greed, lust and power, and the efforts of those individuals to rescue some of those artefacts from such a terrible fate, miserably falls short in this George Clooney-directed adaptation of the book of the same title.

The eponymous Monuments Men were a group of conscientious art historians, museum curators and archivists who formed the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives program – a collective tasked with finding and defending artworks and pieces of historical importance stolen by the Germans. Clooney's movie has a team of seven intrepid conscripts – played by the likes of Matt Damon, Bill Murray and John Goodman – working their way through France, Belgium and Germany on a recovery program that actually involved over 300 men and women, most of whom worked alone rather than in a ramshackle group, as portrayed by the Hollywood production (Clooney has been quoted as saying that 80 per cent of the story is completely true and accurate, and that almost all of the scenes happened – make of that what you will).

The Monuments Men, which Clooney both directed and plays the lead role in, isn't without merit. It contains vibrant dialogue at times, and pulls on the heartstrings occasionally. But it lacks cohesion, and ping-pongs between its poignant primary storytelling and schmaltzy sub-comedy, and as such fails to deliver on too many different levels. It fails to engage because the characters are thinly sketched and predictable; its narrative bumps along without ever fully engaging; and it takes a very, very US-centric slant on what was, in actual fact, a multinational program.

Europe was artistically raped and pillaged by Hitler's Germany during the Second World War. Paris was ravaged, Italian cultural centres were trashed, and Belgium lost artworks that were irreplaceable. This is a story well worth telling, but this film manages to trivialise it, relegating a tale of derring-do and bravery to a series of set pieces and hammed-up acting. Sure, there are some very capable actors employed within this film, but not one surfaces with a notable performance, let alone one that could be called career-defining or Oscar-worthy. Even the usually reliable Cate Blanchett's portrayal of a Parisian museum worker is almost *'Allo, 'Allo!* laughable in its delivery.

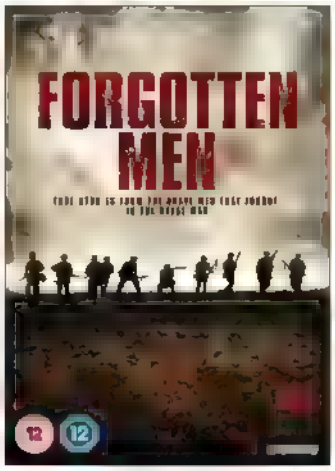
The film lacks cohesion, and ping-pongs between its poignant primary storytelling and schmaltzy sub-comedy

George Clooney has proved himself to be an extremely capable actor, with a string of impressive performances to his name. He's less well-known as a director, and *The Monuments Men* suggests that that isn't likely to change any time soon. **Paul Pettengale**

FORGOTTEN MEN

Dir: N/A *Studiocanal* **RRP £13**

★★★



In this, the centenary of the beginning of the First World War, there are obviously a plethora of documentaries hitting the shops, but it's likely that none of them will be quite like this, seeing as it was made back in 1934!

As the name suggests, *Forgotten Men* tells the incredible story of some of those brave men who fought on the Western Front during the Great War; men who too often remain nameless and faceless due to the tendency to generalise about what went on between 1914 and 1918. We hear their accounts from the men themselves, via rarely seen interviews, and these are coupled with original footage and photography. There's an outstanding introduction by General Sir Ian Hamilton, the commander of the failed Gallipoli campaign, and a strong narrative throughout, thanks to the presenter, historian Sir John Hammerton. And if all of that's not enough, there's also a distinguished commentary from well-respected war historian Max Arthur among the DVD extras.

As you would imagine, the personal accounts featured are powerful and provocative, candidly depicting the horrors of war. The tone of the documentary reflects the sensitive subject matter, and remains restrained and respectful throughout, while still managing to supply contemporary viewers with great analysis and an unbiased perspective on the conflict.

With contributions from Italian and Belgian nationals, and former members of the German Wehrmacht, alongside the memories of British war veterans, *Forgotten Men* offers a fascinating and moving overview of the First World War, and is a vital historical document. **Alix Stevens**

1914: THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

Dir: Michael McGuire
Three Wolves Ltd **RRP £7**

★★★

Michael McGuire's feature film tells the story of the Canadian 21st Battalion and their preparation for the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, an assault within the Somme offensive (which actually took place in 1916 and not, as the title suggests, 1914). The engagement marked the debut of Canada's forces on the Somme battlefield.

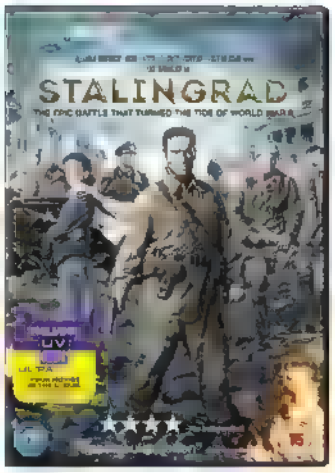
We follow Sergeant Reid and his young recruits during the build-up to their impending attack. Not only must Reid prepare his battalion for the fierce challenges that lie ahead, he must also deal with the day-to-day difficulties of life in the trenches, including injuries to his men and supply issues. To make matters worse, there's an underage recruit in the trench, who's recently been sent to the frontline.

1914: The War To End All Wars is an unusual movie in that it takes place in real time and was filmed in one shot. You have to give McGuire some credit for trying to emulate the classics of that particular style, such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* and Alexander Sokurov's *Russian Ark*. Unfortunately, in this case the style is poorly executed and, in parts, the wobbly camerawork leaves you feeling uncomfortable. The film was made on a limited budget and, sadly, it shows.

That said, there's still much to enjoy in this mini-opus. It's successful in conveying the young soldiers' bravery in the face of the terror they feel as they prepare to go into battle. And at just 90 minutes, it's short enough to keep you engaged. **Hannah Mears**

STALINGRAD

Dir: Fedor Bondarchuk
Sony Pictures Home Entertainment **RRP £6**
★★★



The Battle of Stalingrad (explored in detail on page 20 of this issue) was one of the fiercest engagements of the Second World War, and also one of the most decisive. The German offensive to capture the city was supported by intensive Luftwaffe bombing, and there were, unimaginably, over a million casualties on the Soviet side alone. Ultimately, though, the Germans were defeated and their army never regained the initiative. In acknowledgement of its people's epic struggle, Joseph Stalin bestowed upon Stalingrad the honour of "Hero City" in 1945.

Director Fedor Bondarchuk's film focuses on a group of Russian soldiers as they fight to defend a strategically placed apartment block during the battle, and the men's subsequent relationship with the two women who live there.

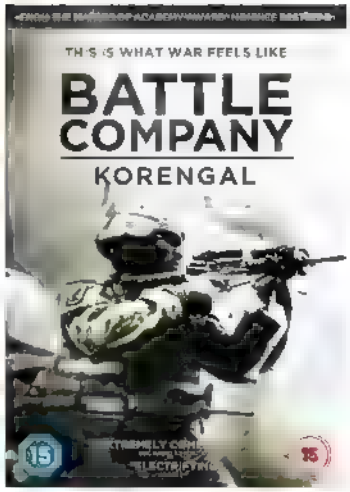
The battle scenes are epic – as they need to be. The special effects are incredible and, at times, you feel like you're immersed in a video game. While it's understandably violent, it's successful at allowing you to experience a little of what it must've felt like in the heat of one of history's bloodiest battles.

On the whole, though, while Bondarchuk tries to emulate his father Sergei's grand scope as a director, the film somehow fails to engage and, at two hours 15 minutes, it's too long. The film is weak on character development, lacks an emotional punch and doesn't seem to know whether it's a tale of love or an all-out action flick.

Despite these flaws, there's still some enjoyment to be had from *Stalingrad*, simply because the thrilling action scenes can't fail to impress. **Hannah Mears**

BATTLE COMPANY: KORENGAL

Dir: Sebastian Junger
Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment **RRP £7**
★★★★



Tim Hetherington and Sebastian Junger's acclaimed, Oscar nominated 2010 documentary *Restrepo* confronted viewers with a soldier's-eye view of life in an advanced outpost, in what was then regarded as "the deadliest place on earth" – Afghanistan's Korengal Valley. It focused on the near impossible job faced by the Second Platoon of Battle Company in clearing the valley of insurgency and winning the trust of the locals.

This sequel returns to the soldiers' new outpost to focus more on their day-to-day feelings, from extreme bravado to extreme boredom, abject trauma to light relief, while exploring the emotional impact the events of the first movie had on those involved, from religious guilt to post-traumatic stress. There's a real sense of the almost-unbreakable bonds war creates between the protagonists, resulting in many of them being keen to return again from their safe First World lives to this apparent hell on earth – because, for all they went through, they went through it together, and those feelings of family camaraderie are hard to replicate back on civvy street.

The fact that Hetherington was killed on a subsequent documentary expedition also reflects the bravery of the filmmakers, yet they are also subtle enough to let the footage speak for itself, and not to apply any over-arching message. Right or wrong, it depicts these young men as real, fallible human beings who are nonetheless capable of exceptional restraint and bravery amid daily fear for their lives and incessant provocation. **Johnny Sharp**

LONE SURVIVOR

Dir: Peter Berg *Universal Pictures* **RRP £10**
★★★

There is, of course, an immediate criticism to be made of this modern war drama starring Mark Wahlberg, which is that the title of the film rather gives away how you can expect it to end. So a little of the theatrical spice is removed from the word go, regardless of whether or not you happen to be familiar with the story of four US Navy SEALS who are deposited in the heart of the treacherous Hindu Kush mountain range to capture a prolifically murderous Taliban leader during the Afghanistan conflict.

Wahlberg is joined on the expedition by Taylor Kitsch, the all-action lunkhead who previously stank up the screen in director Peter Berg's last big Hollywood effort, the risible sci-fi/board-game mash-up *Battleship*; the rather more refined actorly chops of Emile Hirsch, who gave such a startling performance in Sean Penn's *Into The Wild*, the ever dependable Ben Foster, oozing wired nervous tension; and Eric Bana as the missing commander trying to get his boys home.

The film plays fast and loose with its historical facts, as is often the case with films about recent military missions, but the main criticism for me is that, Foster's warm-hearted sniper Axe aside, you don't really get a feel for any of the characters, so much as their abilities to get into and out of scrapes using their superior training and firepower. There's nothing wrong with that as such – at the end of the day, it worked for *Black Hawk Down* – but when you know how it's all going to end, and the meat of the film is constant gunplay, it feels very much like a video game that you don't even have the fun of playing. **Pete Cashmore**

WORLD WAR I LIVE

iPhone app *Interrobang Group* **Free**
★★★★

It is, of course, the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War, and, as such, you could be forgiven for being sniffy about modern cultural tat that could be seen to be making light of that most hideous of conflicts. However, the unabashed zeal and deep knowledge of its subject matter make *World War I Live* an endlessly fascinating app.

It poses a simple question: what if the original conflict was played out in a time when rolling news was a constant reality, as it is today, and mobile-phone technology both existed and enjoyed the same level of advancement that it does a hundred years later? And so it is that the major events of the 1914-18 conflict are delivered in real-time to your phone handset as regular bulletins, giving you your own rolling news coverage of a distant historical event.

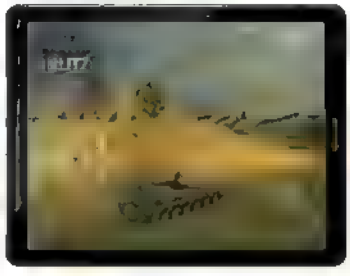
World War I Live is an ingenious and fascinating way for both younger and older people to learn about a period of history that binds us all. **Pete Cashmore**

WORLD OF TANKS: BLITZ

iPhone/Android app *Wargaming.net* **Free**
★★★

This is pretty much the polar opposite of *World War I Live*, in that you don't learn anything from it, and it's just about shooting other tanks with your tank. There's nothing wrong with that, provided you're doing it from the safety of your mobile and not, for example, in a shopping precinct. The problem with *WOT: Blitz* is that the tanks themselves are hard to control – but then, you could argue that that's a shot in the arm of realism.

Also, if you're the first to be blown up on your team (you hook up with random online players), you won't enjoy the rest of the game. But when it gives you what it says on the tin, you may find yourself accepting the game's foibles and ending up, as I did, addicted to the explosions. **Pete Cashmore**



HISTORY of WAR

on sale 4TH SEPT

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

NORTHERN IRELAND
HOW THE TROUBLES CAME TO BE

THE SPYING GAME
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

BATTLE IN HIGH WOOD
THE STORY OF ALEC READER

North vs South

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

HOW THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL NATION WAS FORGED THROUGH BATTLE

Plus!

INDIAN MILITARY COMMANDERS – WWII: HOW PARIS WAS TAKEN
WWI IN CARTOONS – AND MORE WEAPONS THAT CHANGED HISTORY

The Ten Greatest WAR-DRAMA BOX SETS

Got a birthday coming up? You could do a lot worse than ask for one of these. Nick Soldinger fires up the DVD player and gets lost for hours in some of the finest military dramas ever filmed

1 BAND OF BROTHERS

Warner Home Video, 2001

Spielberg's tribute to the citizen soldiers who defeated tyranny in WWII is one of the greatest TV series ever made. It retraces the remarkable journey that Easy Company, the US 101st Airborne's toughest unit, made from the D-Day landings, via Operation Market Garden, to its legendary role in the Battle of the Bulge, with almost faultless period accuracy. We get to know the "brothers" as they fight, die or are disfigured liberating Fortress Europe – not least their brave and brilliant leader Colonel Winters. Although, he's been softened for the small screen; in real life, Winters was a hard-ass who carved a notch in his rifle butt every time he got a kill.

2 GENERATION KILL

Warner Home Video, 2008

Based on *Rolling Stone* hack Evan Wright's memoir of riding shotgun with the US 1st Marine Recon Division as they spearheaded the invasion of Iraq in 2003, this is a criminally underrated bit of television. Much of the action takes place inside the cabin of the Humvee on point as it races through the Arabian desert towards Baghdad. In here, we get to learn about war from the grunt's perspective – in all its hilarious, politically incorrect, put-upon and frequently insightful glory. With Hollywood-sized budgets, the show doesn't disappoint when stuff needs to get blown up by helicopters, but it's the script – marshalled brilliantly by *The Wire*'s David Simon – that's the real star of the show. A true, if slender, work of genius. Essential.

3 THE PACIFIC

Warner Home Video, 2010

Spielberg's paean to the men who fought the Japanese in World War Two is no less ambitious than *Band Of Brothers*, but is slightly less successful in its storytelling. Its problem lies in its split narrative, which follows the war from the perspective of three US marines in different battalions – Robert Leckie, Eugene Sledge and Medal of Honor winner John Basilone – as they fight their way from Guadalcanal, via Peleliu and Okinawa to Iwo Jima. Despite being somewhat disjointed, the series still shows, in unflinching detail, the horrors that thousands of young Americans faced in the Pacific island jungles, fighting the fanatical Japanese. Based largely on Leckie and Sledge's must-read memoirs, this is a compelling gateway into the story of the Pacific war.

4 HATFIELDS & MCCOYS

Sony Pictures, 2012

In the US, the phrase "like the Hatfields and McCoys" is apparently commonly used to describe an on-going dispute. It originates from a real-life bloody feud that began during the American Civil War, and set two families at each other's throats for the next 30 years. Set on the Kentucky/West Virginia border, where the fissure between the Confederate South and the Union North could be found, the series explores the hatred that set American against American. It's birth-of-a-nation stuff, as the wild mountain men struggle not just with each other, but with the realisation that their way of doing things – with rope, torch and rifle – won't be tolerated in the new America.

5 VIETNAM

Metrodome, 1987

Thanks to films like *Platoon*, the 1980s saw a revival of interest in the Vietnam War. One movie, *Tour Of Duty*, even generated its own rather excellent spin-off television series, but an even better one came out of Oz. *Vietnam* showed the war from the rarely told perspective of Australia – a country that committed some 60,000 military personnel to the conflict and suffered around 3,500 casualties. If you can get past the wonky, dated synth background music, this compelling drama explores how one family is torn apart, as the father (who works for the government), the son (who is called up) and the daughter (who becomes a leading advocate of the anti-war movement) are all variously transformed by the horrors of war.

6 TURN

AMC, 2014

Cloak-and-dagger meets Redcoats and bayonets in this American War of Independence drama about the Culper Ring – the real-life espionage outfit that operated in New York under the orders of George Washington. The first series (another is currently being worked on) focuses on the early years of the war, with Revolutionary War hero Abe Woodhull being lured off his farm to spy on the Brits by his old school friends. New York is in British hands, Washington's forces have been driven into the wilderness, and it's up to Woodhull and pals to gather vital information about the pesky Redcoats without getting rumbled by those still loyal to the crown. Fans of this period will love it – *Turn* is great time-machine TV!

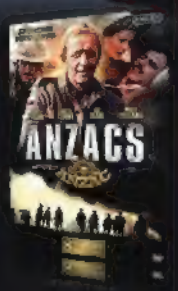
7 SHAKA ZULU

Anchor Bay, 1986

The great warrior king Shaka was the man who gave the Zulu army its most innovative tactic in the "bullhorn" battle formation that helped them defeat the British Army on more than one occasion. This epic retelling of his life shows how Shaka survived a brutal childhood to gain royal glory, taking in family strife, political intrigue, witchcraft and violent battle scenes along the way. The script is Shakespearean in scope, stuffed full of big, memorable characters, and often sharply satirical insights into the similarities between the so-called civilised British Empire and the apparently primitive Zulu one it came to destroy.

8 ANZACS

Source 1 Media, 1985



Another bonzer and, indeed, ripper 1980s mini-series from Down Under. This one, set during WWI, follows the adventures of a group of Aussies who enthusiastically enlist in the Australian Imperial Force in 1914. They see action first at Gallipoli in 1915, before being shipped off to the Western Front to take on the Germans at Pozieres during the Battle of the Somme, then at the third Battle of Ypres, the Battle of Amiens and, finally, the Australian-led victory at the Battle of Hamel under General Sir John Monash. Life in the trenches is recreated in surprisingly graphic detail, while the banter and bonhomie between the diggers demonstrates how men cope with war's horrific extremes.

9 DAS BOOT

Eurovideo, 1985

No, not mistaken, it is a film, but in 1985 director Wolfgang Petersen took the original rushes and recut it for TV, coming up with this 282-minute-long, six-episode extravaganza. Like the movie, it portrays the life of a U-boat crew during World War Two in all its sweaty, claustrophobic intensity, as they hunt the Atlantic and the Mediterranean for British shipping. The difference between this and the movie original is the pacing: the plot is exactly the same, but the episodes unfold in real time, giving the viewer an even more realistic insight into the oppressive life under the waves endured by submarine crews, with the stress, privations and dangers they faced from drowning and depth charges. A classic.

10 NAPOLEON

Beta Films, 2002

This rich, fast-moving retelling of Napoleon's life manages to include just about every major event the wee man went through, and also every battle – all recreated in highly accurate detail, right down to the correct brass tunic button. The budgets must have been blockbuster big, too, because not only are there Hollywood names sprinkled throughout (take a bow, John Malkovich, Isabella Rossellini and Monsieur Depardieu), but the sweep of the series is staggering. The military campaigns are recreated on an especially epic scale – if you're a fan of cavalry charges, cannon smoke and clanging swords, this will not disappoint. At six hours long, it manages to cram in an awful lot, but then that Napoleon was a very busy chap!

WAR in NUMBERS

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Counting the cost of **democracy and nationalism** in 18th-century France

14

▲ On 14 July 1789, Parisians attacked and captured Bastille prison in search of gunpowder. This signalled the start of the French Revolution.

1977

◀ The guillotine wasn't abandoned in France until 1977. The country abolished capital punishment altogether in 1981.

Shutterstock

10

▲ The number of years the Revolution lasted, from 1789-99.

361

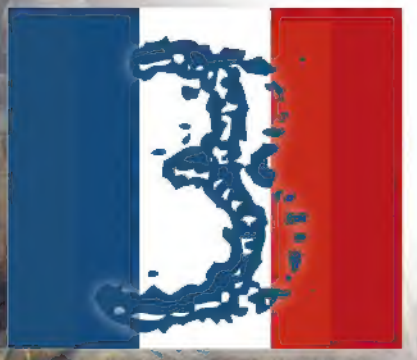
◀ When it came to the vote over whether to execute King Louis XVI, 361 voted for and 288 against.

40,000

▲ More than 40,000 people were killed by the revolutionary government in just ten months (1793-94) in what became known as the Reign of Terror. Of these, 16,594 were killed by guillotine.

1799

▲ Napoleon Bonaparte took power in 1799, beginning a dictatorship that lasted 15 years.



▲ There were three phases to the Revolution: the Moderate Stage (1789-92), the Radical Stage (1792-94) and the Directory (1795-99).

97

▲ 97 per cent of Europe's population at this time was struggling to survive on a daily basis, due to inflated prices.

100

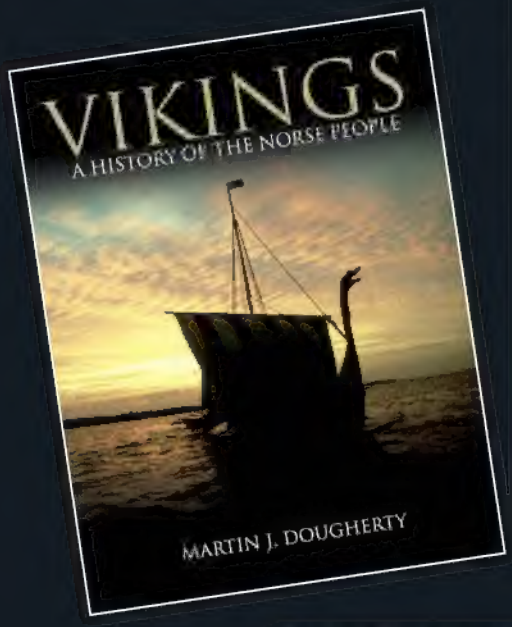
▲ When the French monarchy was overthrown, temporary changes to the calendar were made. Days of the week increased to ten, with days divided into ten hours. Each hour had 100 minutes and each minute had 100 seconds!

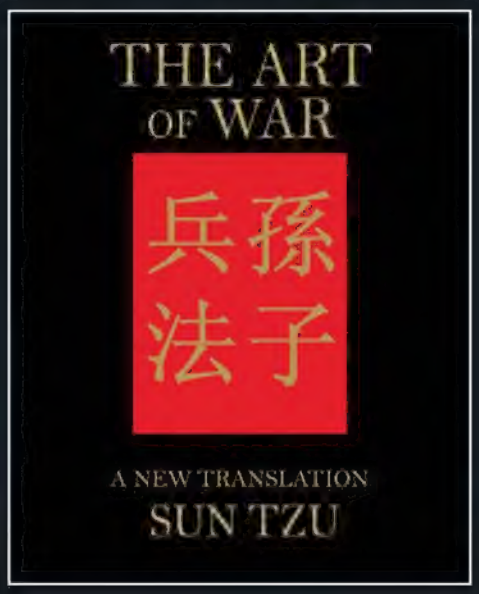
4

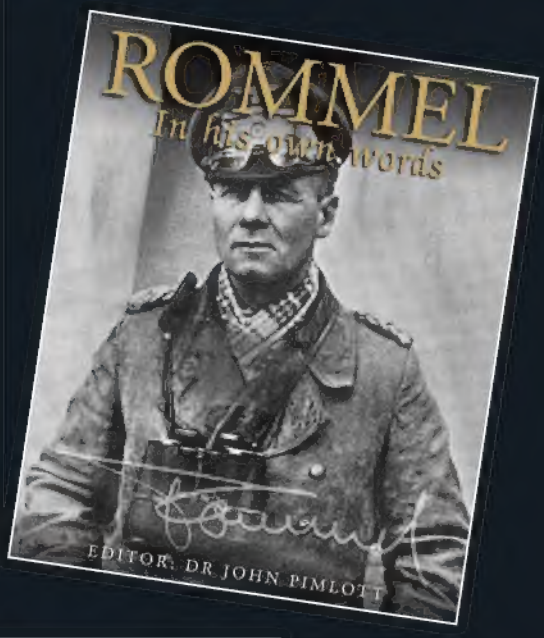
▲ King Louis XVI was executed four years into the Revolution, in 1793, for crimes against the people.

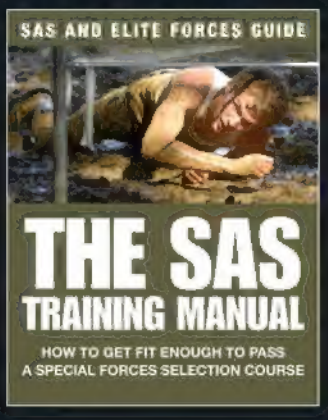
Fotolia

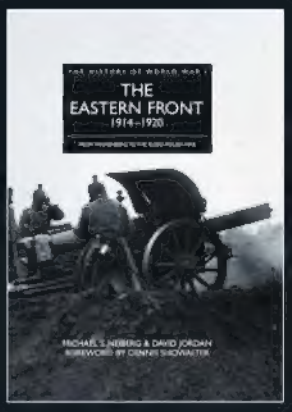
Summer reads: eBooks from Amber Books

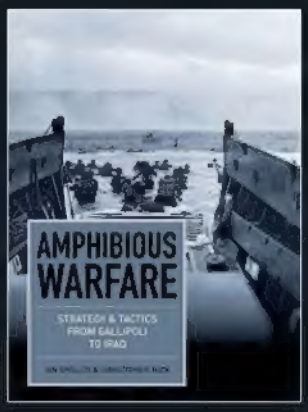




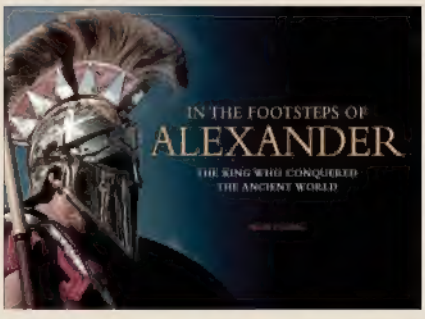








COMING SOON...



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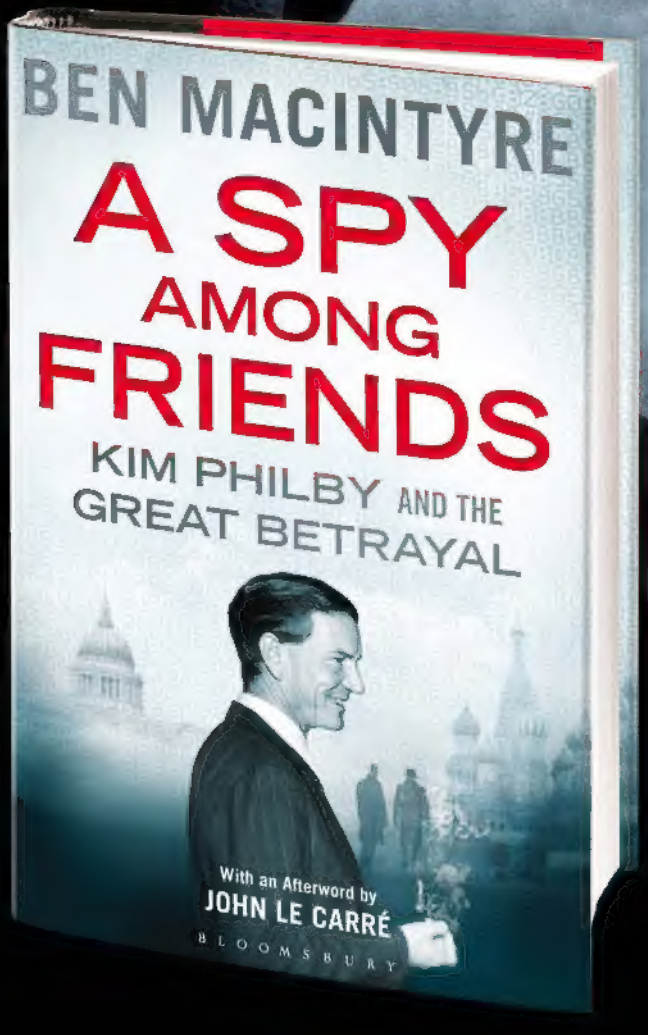

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